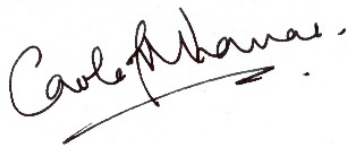# RECONSTRUCTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CHURCH,

WITH SOMERSET AS A CASE STUDY
(Volume 1 of 3)

Submitted by Carole Jane-Marie Lomas, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* in *Archaeology*, 5 October 2021*.*

This *thesis* is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that any material that has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University has been acknowledged.

ABSTRACT

This thesis identifies how the early medieval Church developed in Somerset; the relevant date range being from the post-Roman period, or the mid-seventh century in Somerset, to the eleventh century. The key objective of the thesis being to use Somerset as a case study in order to contribute to a wider understanding of how the early Church evolved across the British Isles. It achieves this by developing a systematic, multi-disciplinary approach using a broad range of data including for example, archaeological, historical and topographical evidence. Whereas the starting point for previous research into the early Church was the known or probable minster churches, this thesis uses an inclusive approach so that the starting point is a list of every pre-sixteenth-century church and chapel in Somerset. Adopting this approach has ensured that any early medieval minsters which lost significance over time have been identified. Without this approach it would have been impossible to understand how the Church developed. A major issue to be faced in understanding Church development in Somerset is the paucity of historical, architectural and archaeological evidence. This thesis therefore focuses on identifying the early great estates and how they divided into the early *parochiae* and shows that by building on the work of other researchers it is possible to use topographical evidence to identify early great estate and *parochiae* boundaries. The topographical evidence, coupled with historical and morphological data also facilitated the development of criteria to identify when sites were chosen as religious focal points including the sites of Somerset's post-Roman churches. This then made it possible to establish the principles and criteria by which Somerset's early medieval parochial minsters can be identified and how the evolving structure of the early Church in the county and across the South-West can be understood.

- 4 -

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

VOLUME 1

VOLUME 2

VOLUME 3

LIST OF CHAPTERS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

APPENDICES

[The appendices will be stored electronically and accessed at Open Research Exeter (ORE)].

ABBREVIATIONS FOR PUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

ASC	Swanton, M.J. (trans. and ed.), 1997. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, London.
Bath *Acta*	Ramsey, F. M. R. (ed.), 1995. *English Episcopal Acta: Bath and Wells 1061-1205*, Vol. 10, Oxford.
Bede	Latham, R.E., 1990. *Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, London.
DB	Thorn, C. and Thorn, F., 1980. *Domesday Book 8: Somerset*, Chichester.
Drokensford	Hobhouse, Bishop. (ed.), 1887. *Calendar of the Register of John de Drokensford, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1309-1329*, Somerset Record Society 1.
Gifford	Holmes. T.S. (ed.), 1899. *The registers of Walter Gifford, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1265-6, and of Henry Bowett, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1401-7*, Somerset Record Society 13.
Hereford *Acta*	Barrow, J. (ed.), 1993. *English Episcopal Acta: Hereford 1079-1234*, Vol. 7, Oxford.
Ralph	Holmes. T.S. (ed.), 1896. *The Register of Ralph of Shrewsbury, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1329-1363; from the original in the Registry at Wells*, 2 Vols. Vol. 1 = Somerset Record Society Vol. 9 and Vol. 2 = Somerset Record Society Vol. 10.
Sawyer or S.	Sawyer, P., *The Electronic Sawyer* accessed online (http://www.esawyer.org.uk/about/index.html). Charters are as numbered and described in the *Electronic Sawyer* and any Latin quotations are copied from this database.
Taxatio	Record Commission, 1802b. *Taxatio Ecclesastica* accessed online via Humanities Research Institute based at Sheffield University accessed online (https://www.dhi.ac.uk/taxatio/).

ABBREVIATIONS IN THE TEXT

AP	Ancient parish (Youngs 1980)
C as in 19thC	Century
CPAT	Clywd-Powys Archaeological Trust
DB	Domesday Book
Digimap	Maps downloaded from EDINA Historic Digimap Service (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).
Ed. Eds	Editor / Editors
EP	Ecclesiastical parish (Youngs 1980)
fn(s)	Footnote(s)
HER No.	Historic Environment Record number
No. Nos	Number(s)
OE	Old English
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRN	Primary Reference Number
SANHS	Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society
SCC	Somerset County Council
Som. HER No.	Somerset Historic Environment Record
Trans.	Translator
Values for example, £5 10s 2d	Five pounds, ten shillings [20s = £1] and two pennies [12d = 1s]
VCH	Victoria County History
Vol.	Volume

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT

This thesis explores the question of how the early Church developed in England through a case study of how the ecclesiastical landscape of Somerset was transformed between the sixth and eleventh centuries. This is not a new question and it is difficult to answer, not just for Somerset but across the British Isles. Previous researchers have shied away from trying to understand how the Church developed, particularly when, how and why churches were established in particular locations. Instead they have concentrated on answering only specific questions such as which churches were minsters. By concentrating on these more tangible and understandable elements, the question of how they fitted into the overall development of the Church has been ignored to a greater or lesser extent. Consequently, key questions have not been addressed. The most important of these with regard to Somerset being: what was the geographical framework within which the Church was organised, were early churches sited on pre-existing post-Roman sites and how can the county's early medieval minsters be identified, particularly those which had lost significance by the eleventh century? In order to answer these questions it was clear that a new research approach was needed. Therefore a systematic, multi-disciplinary methodology was constructed which facilitated understanding of the multi-factorial relationships between the landscape and churches, and between churches and royal *villae*. Consequently, the questions listed above in relation to Somerset's early medieval Church have been answered. In addition, this thesis demonstrates how this new research methodology can be used to understand the early development of the Church elsewhere.

How the identification of early medieval churches could be approached was summarized by Charles Thomas in commenting on how to find churches in late Roman Britain, that it is the 'high importance of continuity – of working backwards from the known to the unknown' (Thomas 1980, 135). Initially, a

retrogressive approach was used for this research, the starting point for which was the churches and chapels existing in the nineteenth century but it did not assist in answering the key questions detailed above.

This thesis demonstrates the importance of acknowledging when traditional approaches and sources of data are inadequate and the necessity of considering what other methodologies and evidence can be used. In particular, that it is essential to research a specific area solely using evidence relative to that area, however sparse, rather than using a comparative approach based on research models derived from regions with rich early medieval architectural, archaeological and/or textual evidence. To successfully address the objectives of this thesis would have been impossible if the starting point, as used by other researchers, was those churches which had remained important and were 'known' or presumed minsters. Therefore, an alternative approach was used: to look for the early churches which had lost status using a methodology based on systematic analysis of a broad range of evidence. This enabled the construction of a robust comparative assessment process which facilitated the identification of the various stages or 'layers' by which Somerset's early medieval Church evolved as discussed by Jonathan Pitt (2003, 62) in relation to Wiltshire. He made the crucial point that the anomalies and difficulties in understanding how the ecclesiastical pattern developed 'preserve relics of changes over the entire Anglo-Saxon [early medieval] period' and that they may preserve evidence of successive 'layers' of ecclesiastical organisation.

The key point that must be made is that the term 'developed' in relation to Somerset's early medieval Church is not about stability but about a process involving continuous change. In particular this thesis demonstrates that within individual *parochiae* that process of change varied considerably, there was no one trajectory by which the Church developed across Somerset. This underlines why using a comparative research approach based on theoretical models of Church development would not have enabled the development of Somerset's Church to be understood. This is the major difference between this and other research into the early Church. The difficulties in attempting to analyse and document how the Church evolved were manifold but it is important to begin by considering the wider historical context.

1.1.1 *The formation of Somerset*

Establishing a geographical context for this research was key and without doing so it would not have been possible to establish how the Church developed in Somerset. The boundary of the county is largely topographically defined but there is no evidence as to when the geographical area known as Somerset was first delineated. Somerset contains diverse types of landscape as shown in Figure 1.1 with areas of high ground rising to 518 metres above sea level to the Somerset Levels in the centre of the county which in many places is below sea level. Understanding the internal topography of the county was key to identifying Somerset's early great estates and its early medieval *parochiae*.

Relatively little is known about the pre-Roman tribal divisions within the South-West. The only evidence indicating how Somerset might have been divided between three Iron Age tribes is the distribution pattern of the *Dumnonii, Durotriges* and *Dubonni* coinage. Reviewing this evidence thirty years ago Michael Costen (1992, 22, figure 1.7, 23) noted that the coinage for each tribe had been found in distinct and separate areas of the county and beyond its current borders. The implication is therefore that during the Iron Age Somerset did not exist as a discrete geographical entity.

Susan Pearce, renowned for her work on the history and archaeology of the early medieval South-West (Pearce 1978; 1981; 1982b; 1985; 2004; 2012), has proposed that during the late second-century Roman reorganisation 'a new administrative area was created, centred on Ilchester [the only Roman town in central Somerset], giving the divisions which became, broadly, the later shires of Devon, Dorset and Somerset' (Pearce 2004, 23); this view was later endorsed by Costen (2011, 12-3). This implies that Somerset was administered as a separate entity within the post-Roman kingdom of *Dumnonia*.

Figure 1.1. Map of Somerset showing its main topographical features

Low lying land liable to flood

Land above 50m.

Land above 183m.

River Avon

Selwood Forest

Selwood Forest

The Mendips

River Brue

River Parrett

River Yeo

The Levels

The Polden Hills

Map is based on various sources including Williams (1970, figure 1) for the rivers and low lying land

River Isle

Quantocks

River Tone

Blackdown Hills

Brendon Hills

Exmoor

Scales

5   10   miles

0   10   20

0   5   10   15   kilometres

N

There is no written evidence which identifies the existence of Somerset as a political entity until Asser wrote his life of King Alfred in 893 AD (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 83) and it also appears retrospectively in the late-ninth century Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 845 AD (Swanton 1997). The modern name of Somerset is derived from *Sumor sæton* or *Sumortūn-sǣte* meaning the people who are dependent on Somerton which is in the centre of the county close to Ilchester (Watts 2004).

1.1.2   *Historical background to the research*

The traditional view of British Christianity in the fourth century sees it as being well organised (Collingwood 1937, 271) and in 314 AD three British bishops attended the Council of Arles and three the Council of Rimini in 360 AD (Collingwood 1937, 271; Blair 2005, 11). In the 1930s it was thought that British Christianity was deeply rooted in the population remaining in the 'shrunken and impoverished towns' (Collingwood 1937, 272). Consequently, it was believed that 'Christianity in Late Roman Britain was minimal, entirely urban … and insufficiently rooted to withstand the disruptions of the post-400 age' (Thomas 1998, 37; see also James 2001, 66). However, the extent to which Roman Christianity should be described as urban has been reconsidered by David Petts (2003, 161-72). He concluded that the development of Christianity in Britain was based on a semi-rural rather than a semi-urban infrastructure. The degree to which the Church establishment remained intact has been demonstrated by Thomas Charles-Edwards (2000). In his study of Christianity in Ireland he established that by the fifth century the politically dominant religion in Britain and Ireland was Christianity and that the Church was unaffected by the withdrawal of the Roman authorities (Charles-Edwards 2000, 185; see also Quensel-von Kalben 1999, 94-5; Petts 2009, 158-61). Susan Oosthuizen (2019, 19-41; see also Higham 2008, 79) in her recent review of post-Roman historical and archaeological evidence reached a similar conclusion. Indeed, John Blair (2005, 11) is quite clear that this 'episcopal hierarchy, with which Germanus and Patrick dealt in the fifth century' was still in existence in the early sixth century when Gildas was exhorting various 'tyrants' to be better Christians.

We know, for example, that the bishop of the West Saxons attended the 672 AD Council of Hertford, along with three other bishops, Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury and representatives from Northumbria (Cubitt 1995, 249-50). No doubt there were also synods and meetings for which there is no surviving written evidence. Bede for example, discusses a meeting between Augustine and the bishops in the early seventh century but apart from his detailed description there are no extant records of the meeting (*Bede*, 104-7; Cubitt 1995, 247). It is therefore quite clear that the prevailing religion in sixth-century Britain was Christianity and that the post-Roman Church had a well-established and functioning administrative structure.

1.1.3   *Terminology*

Before discussing the development of the early Church in detail it is important to consider the terminology adopted in this thesis so there is clarity about how and why certain words, such as royal *villa*(*e*), are used. The term 'royal *villa*(*e*)' refers to a royal landholding or estate with a central '*vill*' or settlement. Several terms are used which relate to how the early Church was organised, the key ones being '*parochia*(*e*)' and 'minster', these are discussed below in order to understand their usage within this thesis compared to how other scholars have interpreted them.

In 1983 Peter Sawyer identified the location and importance of early medieval royal *tuns* or royal palaces and the concept of royal *villae* has been considered by other researchers (Haslam 1984b, xvi; Aston 1984; Bassett 1989; Blair 2005). Across Somerset in the eleventh century there were a series of large royal estates. At the heart of each would have been a royal settlement or *villa* from which the estate, and the *regione* around it, would have been administered by the kings reeve. It would also host the king and the royal household as they travelled around the kingdom. For example, in 860 AD the king of Wessex probably held a witan, or royal assembly, at the royal *villa* of Somerton (charter S329; Hill 1989, 83) but there is definite evidence that one was held there in 949 (charter S549; Roach 2013, 241-2, table 3). Unfortunately, the precise site of the *villa* is unknown and the only physical evidence of a royal *villa* in Somerset is the late tenth-century royal palace at

Cheddar (Rahtz 1979). Some royal *villae*, such as Somerton, retained their importance and developed into medieval towns while others, such as Kilton did not and all that remains of the *villa* is a farm in a valley with a church on the hill above it.

There are a number of terms used by scholars in relation to early medieval churches; '*parochiae*', 'minster', 'parochial minster' and 'mother-church' and it is important to understand how they have been used in this thesis. '*Parochia*' has 'been the standard term for 'parish' … since the early ninth century' (Blair 2005, 427), although there are no surviving early documents which include the term in this way appearances of the term '*parochia*' or '*parochiae*' in Anglo-Norman documents before 1100 has been deemed sufficient to link the term to minsters and mother-parishes (Blair 2005, 428); see the discussion below about the term 'mother-parish'. However, the term '*parochiae*' only refers in this thesis to the large early *parochiae* into which the early great estates were divided. Each of the delineated Somerset *parochia* discussed in this thesis encompass several nineteenth-century parishes.

There are inherent difficulties in using the terms 'minster' and 'church' during the early medieval period because sometimes these terms refer to different types of establishment (Morris 1989,128-30). It has been argued that the term 'minster' should be adopted for all types of pre-reform (i.e. those existing before 940 AD) monastic religious houses (Foot 1992, 225; 2006, 6). Blair (2005, 3) has discussed the terminology that could be used to describe places of worship and concluded that to attempt to construct a classification system is anachronistic and that the generic term 'minsters' should be adopted. This thesis therefore uses the term 'initial minster' to refer to a church adopted or established to serve, although some distance away, a nearby royal *villa*. The term 'parochial minster' is used in this research to identify the church which has been identified as pre-eminent within an early *parochia* and at which the clergy serving the *parochia* would be based. It should be noted that Blair (2005, 4) instead adopts the terms 'mother-church' and 'mother-parish', but stresses that there is a distinction between a mother-church, i.e. a church with dependent chapels identified from post-Conquest sources, and an early pre-Conquest

mother-church. Therefore, this thesis only uses the term 'mother-church' when it is known that a Somerset church had post-Conquest dependent chapels.

1.2 RESEARCHING THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CHURCH

Previously most pre-Conquest ecclesiastical research was primarily undertaken using historical and architectural evidence. For example, Theresa Hall's (2000, 7, 40, 82) main sources of evidence for her important study into Dorset's minster churches were historical, architectural and archaeological. Her starting point was a list of sites that met certain criteria, for example it had been owned by the royal family or was in ecclesiastical ownership pre-Conquest, and the size of its parish. Each criterion was weighted and it was the total score for each site which determined the list of churches to be researched. Using this approach thirty-seven churches scored more than 10 points (see Hall 2000, 4-8 for details of the system she used). However, it is notable that Hall did not include any criterion which related to where churches were sited.

A number of researchers have used topographical assessments of churches in relation to where they are sited within the landscape and this is increasingly the case (for example, Pearce 1982b, 1985, 2012; Hase 1988, 1994; Charles-Edwards 2000; Turner 2006a, 2006c; Pickles 2006, 2018; Petts 2009, 2015; Costen 2011, 177-224). Some researchers, for example Eric Klingelhöfer (1992), Patrick Hase (1994), and Hall (2000), also considered topographical evidence in relation to early parochial boundaries and whether these were influenced by physical divisions in the landscape such as ridges of high ground, low-lying wetlands and river valleys.

Religious sites are 'not independent of their surroundings, but generally originated as adjuncts, counterparts or components of places' which already had a significant role within the community (Morris 1989, 57). Their significance might therefore be reflected in continuous use despite changes in religious belief. There is evidence that discrete pre-existing sacred or significant places were adopted for religious, ceremonial and communal activities as, for example at Uley, Gloucestershire and at Lamyatt Beacon, Somerset (Yorke 1995, 152-3). The earliest recorded evidence at Uley is Neolithic and the latest is from a church built between the sixth and eight centuries (Historic England Research

Record Hob Uid: 205240) the earliest evidence from Lamyatt Beacon is dated to 250 AD and the latest to 782±90 uncalibrated AD (Som. HER No. 23728). It is obvious that both Uley and Lamyatt were long-standing sacred fixed points within the landscape and recently it has been acknowledged that social power across Europe was embodied within a wide range of such sacred places ranging, for example, from fourth-century BC altars at Lavinium near Rome, to space dedicated to Egyptian gods in the second century, and indeed to sites such as Uley (Sánchez-Pardo and Shapland 2015b, 9). The concept of sacred places is universal and applies to both pagan and Christian religious sites (Sánchez-Pardo and Shapland 2015b, 10-11; see also Morris 1989, 72; Yorke 1995, 152-3). However, it is important to remember that later use of these sites was not about continuity but rather the elite utilising the 'power of the past' as embodied in the place (Sánchez-Pardo and Shapland 2015b, 11). The key point which has been made is that archaeological and indeed historical studies into religious ritual need to pay attention to where that ritual took place as it equates to a specific focal point within the landscape (Moser and Feldman 2014b, 1-11).

The need to take account of the surrounding sacred landscape, and why particular sites in Yorkshire might have been chosen as religious focal points, has been explored by Thomas Pickles (2018, 137-44). Similarly, Blair (2018, 74-84) has emphasised that Christianity was 'part of a continuum' with minsters and churches being established within the existing sacred landscape. It is important though to remember that there is the distinct possibility that over time either/or both a church and its associated settlement may have existed on more than one site (Morris 1985, 49).

Much of the detailed historical research into the early medieval Church has been concerned with identifying the minsters and later mother-churches within a specific area, for example, Surrey, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire (Blair 1991; 1994; 2001; Pitt 2003). Other scholars have discussed the development of minsters in relation to settlement patterns. For example, Andrew Davidson (2009) has concluded that in Gwynedd, Wales by the eleventh century there was a pattern of regularly spaced pre-eminent churches equating to approximately one per cantref or administrative area. There have also been several studies into the inter-relationships between the Church, estates and the landscape. These

include Philip Masters' (2001) into the Church in West Sussex, Duncan Probert's (2002) research into social transition in the South-West, Matthew Godfrey's (2007) into early medieval Norfolk, and Thomas Pickles' (2018) into the Yorkshire minsters.

Some of the most well-known and widely respected historical research into how the early English Church was structured was completed by Steven Bassett (1989a; 1991; 1992a; 1992b; 1998). His analysis of how it developed in and around Shrewsbury provides important insights into how the Church was organised but is reliant on post-Conquest historical evidence and nineteenth-century parish boundaries (Bassett 1991, 3, 20 end note 11). In discussing the origins of the parishes around the large early medieval church at Deerhurst, Bassett (1998) explicitly addresses the size of Deerhurst's original *parochia* using historical and parish boundary evidence, but in the end is unable to draw any firm conclusions. Recent historical research into the development of parishes, particularly in Ireland, has been summarised by Paul MacCottar (2019). He discusses territorial and parochial relationships and acknowledges that the original *parochiae* of churches were much larger than their later parishes. However, there is no attempt to consider that the origins of these *parochiae* are to be found within the topographical divisions of the landscape. Indeed, most of the research into the structure of the early medieval Church has, in the main, been based on historical evidence.

Blair (1991, 12-4) is quite clear, after discussing what evidence can determine the early territorial divisions in Surrey, that it is apparent they result from the fragmentation of earlier much larger 'defined territories'. In 1996 Sinéad Ní Ghabhláin published an article which looked at the origins of post-Conquest parishes in Gaelic Ireland; she concluded that the parishes had developed to provide localised pastoral care within the large secular territorial division of lordship called *túatha*, or small kingdom. Charles-Edwards (2000, 243) also discusses how the Church in Ireland was organised and concluded that, as in Gaul, it was based on pre-existing secular geographical divisions. In Ireland these were the *túaths* into which the country was divided; it was these that formed the constituent members of larger political units, very much as the Roman province and diocese was based on its cities (Charles-Edwards 2000,

243; see also MacCotter 2019). There is agreement that each *túatha* was divided into a number of 'primary parishes' (Ní Ghabhláin 1996, 59) or 'rural monastic *parochiae'* (Charles-Edwards 2000, 244-5); the latter considers that this happened by the sixth to seventh centuries, although he admits that the evidence for this is meagre.

Bassett (1992b, 1, 23), looking at the early *parochiae* in the vicinity of Wroxeter, Shropshire, noted that they tended to be large and 'topographically coherent'; Cound was a 'well-defined land unit' and Tren and Baschurch both included defined river basins. Pickles (2018, 15-6) has recognised that the principal regions of Yorkshire, including that of the Deiran kingdom, are derived from the river system, the underlying bedrock geology and its overlying soil. It was therefore the physical geography or topography of the region which determined the boundary of the Deiran kingdom (Pickles 2018, 15-6). It is of note that many of the early large *parochiae* which have been identified across the country include river basins. This was, for example, found to be true in in kingdom of the Deirans, Yorkshire (Pickles 2018, 137) and this thesis demonstrates it is also the case in Somerset (see Section 7.2).

One study which recognises the importance of topography for rectifying shortcomings in the textual evidence is Ní Ghabhláin's (1996, 39-44). In reconstructing the medieval parishes of Kilfenora in Ireland she utilised a number of historical sources, including the 1302-1306 Ecclesiastical Taxation records and a 1574 list of churches, in a comparable way to how historical evidence is used in this thesis (Ní Ghabhláin 1996, 39). Crucially, as her research progressed, she also took account of the extent to which parish boundaries followed topographical divisions in the landscape, for example watersheds on high ground, areas of low-lying bog and wasteland (Ní Ghabhláin 1996, 43).

The realisation that historical evidence alone was insufficient and that consideration of topographical evidence was essential in order to understand the early Church has been key to evolving the hypothesis on which this thesis is based. It is clear from the studies cited above that the prerequisite to interpreting the pattern of Church development is understanding the main early

territorial divisions within a county or region. Until the boundaries of the early great estates were established based on topographical analysis it was impossible to identify the boundaries of the early *parochiae* in Somerset.

The most recent assessment of how the early medieval British Church was structured concludes by noting the centrality of the early minsters, with their close relationship to royal centres of power even though from the ninth century they were 'battered and reduced' as a more parochial layer of new churches was established (Blair 2005, 505). In reaching his conclusions Blair did not attempt to establish in detail the early parochial structure within which the minsters were sited. The questions that therefore need to be addressed are: how was the Church geographically and institutionally structured in the sixth century, how did it relate to the pre-existing sacred landscape, and how did it evolve between the sixth and the eleventh centuries?

1.2.1   *The early medieval Church in the South-West*

Pearce (2004, 77-134) has completed an in-depth review of the evidence relating to when Christianity was established in the South-West during the Roman period and concludes that it can only be described as patchy and not easy to interpretate. The only significant Christian communities she was able to identify during the fourth and the early fifth centuries were in, or within the vicinity of, the Roman towns of Exeter in Devon, Dorchester in Dorset, Ilchester in central Somerset and Bath in north Somerset (Pearce 2004, 336).

Historical and archaeological research in Dorset, Devon and Somerset to date has not conclusively identified the sites of any post-Roman churches, although a handful of sites have been inferred (Hall 2000; 2003; 2009, 155; Pearce 2004, 133-4). Hall (2000, 83) reached the view that in Dorset there was little evidence of continuity between the post-Roman [British] Church and the early medieval Church. However, Hase (1994, 51) concluded from his study into the Church in Wessex that its foundations in the South-West were based on those of the post-Roman [sub-Roman] Christian Church. Hase was also quite clear that when Wessex took political control of Somerset the bishops would have taken over a well-established Church 'of some vigour' which included rural churches providing pastoral care (Hase 1994, 51). Furthermore, he concluded

that many of the sites would have continued in use into the eighth and ninth centuries; no reconstruction of the Church being thought necessary. Hase used archaeological evidence including burials and cemeteries, historical evidence including the sixth-century writings of Gildas, the ninth-century Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the eleventh-century Domesday Survey and nineteenth-century parish boundaries. Despite this wide range of evidence, it appears that no overall systematic process was adopted to assess it.

Nicholas Orme (1991b, 9) in his brief history of the post-Roman [British or Celtic] Church in Cornwall and Devon was clear that the religious sites established before the sixth century at Braunton and Hartland were included within the structure of the early medieval Church in Devon. The relationship between Church development and post-Roman [British] churches in Devon and Cornwall has also been explored by Robert Higham (2008, 98). He proposed that in Devon some *Dumnonian* churches continued in existence while others, with their presumed early dedication, were either replaced, demoted or disregarded (Higham 2008, 98-9). However, in Cornwall, the *Dumnonian* churches survived in much greater numbers, together with their traditional dedications to Celtic saints, and many became minsters and some local churches (Higham 2008, 98-9). For example, it has been proposed that by the late-seventh century a minster was established in Exeter, Devon adjacent to where a possible post-Roman church existed on the site of the Roman basilica (Pearce 2004, 130; see also Higham 2008, 98, 100). This is likely given that graves dating between the fifth and seventh centuries have been found in the cathedral cemetery (Orme 1991b, 2). Higham (2008, 98) in effect posed the same question as Richard Morris (1985, 49): is there any reason to suppose that *Dumnonian* Devon, or indeed Somerset, possessed fewer churches than have been identified in Cornwall? Prior to this research only a handful of *Dumnonian* churches had been identified in Somerset (Hall 2009; Costen 2011, 177-85). Overall, no progress has been made in establishing a set of criteria by which early church sites might be identified.

There is a lack of consensus as to which churches in Devon were minsters and after reviewing the lists of minsters compiled by others the archaeologist Robert Higham (2008, 95) refrained from reaching any conclusions and

reflected on the difficulties inherent in 'hunt the minster'. Importantly, Higham noted that identifying Devon's early medieval minsters would not provide a full understanding of the county's ecclesiastical organisation and expressed the view that 'some Devon minsters may have developed from *Dumnonian* [post-Roman] churches' and others may have become parish churches (Higham 2008, 95). In so speculating about the development of Devon's early medieval Church Higham raised the possibility that it was founded on churches established during the post-Roman period. Higham's statement is significant given that this thesis has concluded that the Church in Somerset had its roots in the post-Roman period.

After discussing where churches are sited in Wessex, Hase (1994, 54) points out that it is important not to extrapolate a hypothesis, to explain how the Church developed, based on a few disparate examples drawn from across England. Instead, it is important to study the topography of the churches within a defined geographical area so that a view can be reached as to the overall development of the Church. Hase (1994, 54, 58) is quite clear that there are regional differences in how the Church evolved and where important early medieval churches were sited. He concludes that until a 'scientific' topographical study of important Wessex churches has been completed it is impossible to understand how the Church developed (Hase 1994, 58; see also Turner 2006a, 44-8). It is therefore only by establishing a systematic approach to understanding the topography of church sites that the wider pattern of Church development can be understood. A major strand of the evidence in this thesis is the systematic topographical categorisation of Somerset's early churches, how they relate to their surrounding landscape and its physical topography. Whether, for example, a church is sited on a high point within the landscape or within a low-lying area close to a royal *villa*; these topographical categories and how they facilitated the development of this thesis are detailed in Chapter 8 (Sections 8.2 and 8.3).

1.2.2 *Parochial boundaries*

In order to identify early medieval minsters it is essential to first establish the local area, or *parochia,* served by each minster. It has been widely proposed

that the early minster churches were founded within the secular royal *villae* or centrally within the *regiones* defined as small geographical administrative areas (Sawyer 1983; Haslam 1984b, xvi; Croom 1988, 67; Yorke 2006, 59-60). However, this view has increasingly been challenged as more historical research into the organisation of minsters has been undertaken (Morris 1997, 130-1; Blair 2005, 266-8). It has been argued that it is possible to identify correlations between the early great estates, the early *parochiae* of minsters and the hundredal structure (Rippon 2012, 198-200). In Surrey, Blair (1991, 104) identified a close link between the later hundreds and minsters and in Wiltshire Simon Draper (2006, 66-69) came to the view that the hundreds were related to the core territories of the early estates. However, Klingelhöfer (1992, 74-5, 84, 87-91) concluded that in Hampshire the hundredal system post-dated the ecclesiastical administrative structure which was based on earlier topographically defined land units. Similarly, Pitt (2003, 61-2, 67) found in his study of churches in Wiltshire that the establishment of the hundreds was relatively late and can probably be dated to the mid-tenth century, while Probert (2002, 51) has shown that around Exeter many of the hundredal boundaries have a loose geographical coherence and follow topographical features such as ridges of high land. However, this would also be the case if they followed the earlier topographically defined ecclesiastical boundaries.

In 1994 Hase used historical and geographic evidence to consider how the pre-Conquest Church was territorially and geographically organised across Dorset, Somerset and neighbouring counties. Consideration has also been given to the administrative boundaries of early estates and parishes, for example by identifying the detached portions of parishes (Hase 1988; Blair 1991; Draper 2006; Silvester and Evans 2009). Sam Turner (2006a) demonstrated the importance of understanding how churches in Cornwall, Devon and Wessex relate to the wider South-Western landscape. Similarly, Stephen Rippon (2008, 254) came to the view that in Somerset the landscape of nucleated villages and open fields had developed within 'the context of estates that were larger than post-Conquest manors and parishes'. These were smaller than the early large estates which were probably in existence long before the sixth century, although there is no dateable evidence for this assumption. Rippon's conclusions are paralleled by research elsewhere. For

example, Hase (1988) with regard to Hampshire and Stephen Yeates (2006) with regard to the Severn valley considered the extent to which a minster dominated the territory around it, and whether the minster was the fixed point in the landscape, rather than the territory. In doing so Yeates (2006, 62-3) demonstrated that within certain localities it was possible to identify relationships between a minster church, a nucleated Romano-British site and one or more significant Iron Age settlement sites. Recent archaeological research by Adam McBride (2018, 439-41) has emphasised how the 'corporate power' exercised by sixth and seventh-century kings was legitimised and embedded in central royal places linked to public assembly sites and the building of large hall complexes such as at Yeavering, Northumbria. This site is important because it was recorded by Bede as being both a royal *villa* and a significant Christian site. Excavations at Yeavering have also shown that it was an important pre-Christian ritual site (Hope-Taylor 1977; Blair 2005, 55, figure 7). The archaeological evidence relating to large hall complexes is discussed further in Chapter 5 (Section 5.1.1).

Costen (2011, 92-3) has reviewed how the medieval hundreds were organised in Somerset and concluded that the hundredal boundaries were not fixed in the early medieval period and were frequently moved to suit important landholders such as Glastonbury Abbey. In addition, he does not believe the boundaries 'were particularly old' but implemented for pragmatic administrative reasons (Costen 2011, 92). This implies that in Somerset the hundredal boundaries post-date the boundaries of the early *parochiae*. Overall, the indications from other studies are that the hundredal boundaries were grafted on to the earlier parochial boundaries. Therefore, in order to identify Somerset's early *parochiae* it was essential to define the topographical boundaries of the county and its constituent early great estates.

1.2.3 *Pastoral care*

In reconstructing and exploring the ecclesiastical structure of the Church in Somerset no consideration has been given to the 'minster model' debate (for discussions on these issues see Blair and Sharpe 1992; Cubitt 1992, 205-6, 208; 1995, 116 - 8; Blair 1995; 2005, 4-5, 153-5; Cambridge and Rollason 1995;

Palliser 1996; Bassett 1998, 3-6). This academic dispute was between a number of historians each of whom developed a standardised model to describe how pastoral care was provided to communities across England. The debate has been analysed in detail by Probert (2002, 8-15) during his research into South-Western Britain from *c.*400 to *c.*800 AD and he concluded 'that the debate remains unresolved' (see also Bassett 1998, 20). Difficulties elsewhere, for example in Wiltshire (Pitt 2003, 68), in identifying the provision of pastoral care have continued to prompt discussion of the 'minster hypothesis' which underlies the 'minster model'.

In 2005 John Blair, who wrote the article in 1995 which began the debate about pastoral care, reviewed the outcomes from it and concluded that until more research has been completed to the 'point of mapping the parochial geography of all England … revisiting of the debate is unprofitable' (Blair 2005, 153). Therefore, developing a systematic process to identify Somerset's parochial minsters is key to understanding how the Church was structured from the mid-seventh century and how pastoral care was provided.

An important issue which needs to be considered in relation to the early *parochiae* is whether it can be demonstrated that they provided pastoral care across the whole of a specific area or county (Blair 2005, 153-65) as Blair (1991, 104) has identified in Western Surrey. Hase (1994, 46-7) has identified a series of early *parochiae* around Southampton, Hampshire and consequently he concluded that there is a correlation between the 'ancient royal estates' and early medieval churches with 'jurisdictional and religious districts which were essentially coterminous' which covered the whole area by about 700 AD (Hase 1988, 47). However, in Dorset, Hall's (2000, 40-1) research indicated that the *parochiae* which she identified did not cover the entire county. Blair (2005, 153) is clear that it is possible to discern a framework of 'obsolete, often near-invisible' larger parishes within which the later pattern of smaller parishes evolved. This has been shown to be the case in Somerset where, within the early great estates, a pattern of large early *parochiae* has been identified which covers the entire county. However, despite a central minster church being identified within each early *parochia* it cannot be assumed that pastoral care

was provided across the whole of each *parochia* as there is no contemporary evidence to indicate this.

In researching the early Church in Dorset Hall mapped the boundaries of the early large *parochiae* and critically reached the view that frequently they correlated with major topographical features. She concluded that there is unambiguous evidence in Dorset that the *parochiae* boundaries were topographically defined to a greater extent than those of the parishes into which they later divided (Hall 2000, 40). In addition, she established that many of these early large *parochiae* included river basins. This was also found to be true in Hampshire by Klingelhöfer (1992, 87).

The evidence used by Hall (2000, 31) to reconstruct the early large *parochiae* was mainly that provided by relationships between later mother-churches and their chapelries and by nineteenth-century detached areas of parishes. She acknowledged that this approach was problematical due to limited understanding of the origins of many churches. This may explain why Hall (2000, 79) was unable to identify the overall pattern of *parochiae* in Dorset. Probert (2002, 320-4), using mainly textual evidence, such as early English land charters and nineteenth-century Tithe Maps and other evidence for parish boundaries, was also unable to identify the definite survival of early-medieval land units in Devon and Cornwall.

In looking at the early medieval Christian landscape of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, Turner (2006a, 13) adopted the 'long-term perspective afforded by a landscape archaeology approach' to facilitate investigation into how land use shaped the organisation of the Church. In doing so he considered the spatial relationships between rural settlements and ecclesiastical centres. He used an interdisciplinary approach that took account of place-names, historical documents, archaeological evidence and Historic Landscape Characterisation (Turner 2006a, 13, 15-33). The latter is the retrospective deconstruction of the landscape in order to understand how, within a delineated geographical area, the fundamental features of the landscape developed (Rippon 2004). However, the landscape archaeological research completed by Turner (2006a) using this approach contributed little to understanding how the Church was organised.

Therefore, in order to recognise the overall pattern of development and to fully understand the transition from the late post-Roman period to the eleventh century it is essential that more focussed research is completed.

1.3   CASE STUDY: SOMERSET'S EARLY MEDIEVAL CHURCH

Prior to this research there was no definitive understanding of how the early Church developed in Somerset, nor whether an early parochial structure could be identified. In 1975 when Robert Dunning completed his history of Christianity in Somerset, he felt unable to say a great deal about the origins of the Church and noted that the number of churches in existence at the end of the 'Saxon' period was unknown (Dunning 1975, 3-5). Since then several scholars have considered the development of the Church (for example Aston 1986a, 54-8, 74-6; Hill 1989, 155-7; Costen 1992a, 143-57; 2011, 177-224; Hase 1994; Corcos 2002; Hall 2003; 2009; Calder 2004). They have all considered the available evidence in diverse ways, sometimes from a mainly historical perspective, sometimes from an archaeological one and only occasionally from a landscape archaeological point of view.

The paucity of physical evidence in Somerset is striking. Out of hundreds of churches only a handful including Wells Cathedral, Glastonbury Abbey and Muchelney Abbey, contain definite in-situ pre-Conquest fabric (see Appendix 7). There is also a lack of historical evidence apart from that derived from post-Conquest sources; the Domesday Survey, the *c.*1291 *Taxatio* and the fourteenth-century bishops' registers. There are many pre-1066 charters but they very rarely refer specifically to a church. This severe lack of pre-Conquest evidence necessitated the development of a research strategy based on the systematic evaluation of all churches in the county which included using topographical evidence, how churches are sited within the landscape.

Studies utilising a landscape archaeological approach are restricted to studies of individual Somerset churches, for example, that into Holy Trinity church, Street by the landscape archaeologist Michal Calder (2004, 4-11) who used archaeological, topographical and textual evidence. Therefore no systematic assessment of church sites in Somerset has been completed and there is no consensus as to which sites had immediate post-Roman origins, nor

indeed, which churches should be classified as early medieval minsters. This lack of a consensus has constrained the development of a detailed history of Somerset and its Church, as has the paucity of post-Conquest evidence relating to its churches and chapels since the first complete source of evidence about them dates from 1791 when John Collinson published his history of the county.

1.3.1 *Review of previous research in Somerset*

Important research into the development and history of Somerset, which included investigating Somerset's early monasteries and churches, has been completed by Mick Aston (1986a; 1988; 1994; 2000a; 2000c; 2003; 2007; 2009) and Michael Costen (1991; 1992a; 1992c; 1994; 2011; 2015a; 2015b). The profound difficulties in relation to identifying Somerset's early monasteries have, for example, been discussed by Aston (2003). Most of the above research was based on archaeological, morphological, historical and place-name evidence.

The historical and archaeological research by Aston (1986a), Hill (1989), Costen (1992a; 2011), Hase (1994), Corcos (2002), and Hall (2003; 2009) into the early medieval churches of Somerset has provided us with much detailed information using retrogressive analysis; working backwards from the known to the unknown. This technique, as proposed by Thomas (1980, 135), has been used elsewhere to beneficial effect, for example by Hall (2000) in Dorset, Blair (1991) in Surrey, and Hoggett (2010a) in East Anglia.

Costen (2011, 223-4, 233-5) listed the Somerset churches in existence in 1066 based on place names and written sources, primarily charters, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and the Domesday Survey. In addition, he used eleventh-century architectural evidence as detailed by Cramp (2006), and the post-Conquest 'free chapels' which were not under the jurisdiction of the bishop. However, although Costen (2011, 234) concluded that the minster system must be seen as 'an integral part of the social and political structure of Somerset' in the seventh to eighth centuries, the lack of available evidence meant he was unable to identify all of its minsters or the parochial framework within which they existed. To resolve this issue, it is necessary to ask how the minsters can be distinguished from other churches that were in existence during that period. For example, Costen (2011, 223) lists Ilminster as having a minster in 1066, based

on its name, and Kilmersdon as only having a church in 1066, based on its very meagre reference in the Domesday Survey (*DB* 16,14). The evidence he used to make these distinctions is severely limited and therefore provides no insight into the actual importance of these two churches. However, the comprehensive and systematic assessment process used in this thesis has meant that it is possible to identify both Ilminster and Kilmersdon as early medieval parochial minsters and also the likely extent of their *parochiae*.

Costen (2011, 177-201) was able to summarise in general terms the broad pattern of Church development in Somerset and raised several key issues. For example, that 'the new Church was perfectly prepared to accommodate the existing post-Roman churches where they were relevant' so that in parts of the county, but not everywhere, it is possible to identify the relationships 'between early settlements and their religious functions' (Costen 2011, 201). Costen (2011, 185) has argued that by *c.*750 AD there were 'plenty of local churches' in Somerset organised within an episcopal organisation and that there were monastic sites linked with royal v*illae*. He believes these churches are lost to view because 'the loose structure was easily adapted and overlain' by the much more comprehensive approach to Church organisation by Wessex. The extent to which these statements, including the use of the term 'loose structure', can be verified by this thesis will be considered in Chapter 9.

In 2004 Calder considered the problems associated with identifying early ecclesiastical sites in Somerset and discussed the paucity of historical evidence for many churches. However, he, like Nick Corcos (2002, 3-24, 192), recognised that the topographical location of churches is a key strand of evidence in relation to the likely origins of a site. This approach had previously been suggested by Steven Bassett in 1991 regarding the topographical settings of churches in the vicinity of Shrewsbury. It has also been used by Turner (2006a, 37-48) in relation to the South-West, by Masters (2001, 1) in relation to West Sussex and by Pickles (2018, 135-43) in relation to Yorkshire. However, Masters' (2001, 26-8, 76) 'topographical' assessment of churches considered how they relate to sources of water and their relationship to 'burial grounds, enclosures and manorial buildings' rather than how they relate to the surrounding topography which is the approach used in this thesis.

There are inherent problems in identifying and dating early churches in Somerset which have been discussed by Calder (2004). The situation in the county is broadly similar to the lacunae in the historical records for churches across medieval England as identified by Morris (1985, 49). Therefore, according to Morris (1985, 49) a key line of inquiry that should be considered is the 'matter of quantities: how many churches can be reasonably expected to have been in existence at different times?'. This thesis does not explicitly address this question, but its implications are considered, particularly in relation to identifying post-Roman sites.

1.3.2   *Research objectives*

The presumed historical context for this research is that Christianity was the predominant religion in Somerset during the fifth and subsequent centuries, and that churches were in existence across the county. The overall research objective being addressed is to reconstruct a chronology of Church development in Somerset. There are two strands to this objective: to identify Somerset's early medieval minsters and their original *parochiae* and to investigate the trajectories by which the Church evolved from the post-Roman period. How that is defined is open to question because it is dependent on which region of Britain is being discussed and the paucity of reliable written evidence (James 2001, 91-9; Harrington and Welch 2018, 1-8). In Somerset it would have been in the mid-seventh century when the kings of Wessex gained jurisdiction over the county thereby ending control of it by the post-Roman kingdom of *Dumnonia* (Costen 2011, 25-9)*.

Critically, despite an extensive review of existing research into the early medieval Church, no methodology was identified which could, given the paucity of evidence, be used to understand how Somerset's early medieval Church evolved. In addition, there was no consensus as to which churches should be named in the county as medieval minsters. It was therefore not possible, as many studies have done, to start with a list of known minsters. This was viewed as an advantage in planning this thesis in that it provided the opportunity to rethink how to approach research into the early Church because there was no obvious starting point. The initial issue to be addressed was deciding what

methodology should be adopted in order to identify the minsters which had already lost importance pre-Conquest when there was a lack of early historical evidence about these churches.

Therefore, a systematic, multi-disciplinary assessment process was constructed to enable the origins and roles of early medieval churches to be identified. The intention in doing so was to establish a methodology that could be used in other counties which would overcome any local shortcomings in the available evidence, and in particular, identify which minsters had lost significance. The aim was to construct a classification system, which would reflect both the changing status of churches and how each one fitted into the overall Church hierarchy.

It is essential to review all the available textual evidence, drawn from pre-Conquest English charters to the post-Conquest bishops' registers. However, the relatively few surviving charters which provide the only source of contemporary early medieval evidence include virtually no information about Somerset's churches. The Domesday Survey is a valuable source of information for 1066/1086 but it only contains limited evidence about the churches which were in existence. Therefore, most of the historical evidence about Somerset's churches dates from between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries.

So how can these early churches be identified? A retrogressive analysis of all available historical, architectural and archaeological evidence was the first step so that all the churches across Somerset could be systematically assessed as to their importance in the early medieval period. This is the major difference between the approach adopted for this thesis and earlier research into the early Church in Somerset where the starting point was a shortlist of possible, or probable, post-Roman religious sites and early medieval minsters. The decision to adopt a retrospective systematic assessment process means that all the available evidence has been collated from each source. Therefore, data was recorded for all the churches and chapels mentioned by Collinson (1791). No distinction was made between them as to which might be deemed more important in the early medieval period. Similarly, all the details and information

about churches and chapels mentioned in the early bishops' registers and *Acta* were recorded. This approach proved to be successful, but the sheer paucity of historical, architectural and archaeological evidence prior to the eleventh century made it necessary to adopt a different methodology for the next stage of the research. Therefore, in order to progress the analysis of how the pre-Conquest Church developed, a landscape archaeological approach embracing topography has been used; how a church is sited within the landscape, and morphology, how it relates to nearby settlement.

This is the approach used by Corcos (2002, 192-3) to understand the structure of Somerset's early medieval Church. He stressed the need to look at the relationships between churches, how each one relates to the territory within which it is sited (Corcos 2002, 192), and whether the overall territorial framework was based on earlier divisions in the landscape. Corcos (2002, 192-3; see also Blair 1991) stated that it is important to be aware of the 'persistent and tenacious thread of earlier [territorial] arrangements' and the extent to which they reflected shared access to natural resources. Importantly, Corcos (2002, 192) outlined how a comprehensive analysis of Church development in Somerset might be achieved. He makes two further important points: first, that churches should be looked at in their topographical context; and secondly, that the area around Carhampton, and possibly elsewhere, contains churches which may have post-Roman origins (Corcos 2002,192). Corcos (2002, 192) was quite clear that until a topographical survey of large numbers of Somerset churches was completed it would be impossible to understand the 'role of the Church, especially in its wider territorial sense'. This, he considered, should be central to understanding how the Church developed. It was his conclusions that led directly to this thesis.

1.3.3   *Research Questions*

The initial questions considered were as listed earlier: what was the geographical framework within which Somerset's early medieval Church was organised; were the early churches sited on pre-existing post-Roman sites and how could Somerset's early medieval minsters be identified? It soon became clear that a new approach was required to answer these questions and a

methodology was developed which involved the construction of a relational database to enable the evidence to be collated and explored. The database was initially populated with a list of all the nineteenth-century churches and chapels that could be identified in Somerset to which was added all the historical, architectural and archaeological information relating to them. As the database was populated and it was possible to correlate and compare the evidence between churches, in particular that relating to where churches were sited within the landscape, this resulted in more specific research questions being identified. The final list of research questions was:

- To what extent can the physical characteristics of where a church is sited in the landscape (its topographical setting) be related to when the site was originally adopted as a religious focal point? This question explores issues raised by other researchers, particularly Turner (2006, 44-8) in relation to the siting of churches in Wessex.

- Was Somerset's early medieval Church founded on the pre-existing network of post-Roman Christian sites? In addressing this question the thesis explores the extent to which these post-Roman sites had a long-standing role as sacred focal points within the landscape and whether they continued as central places of power as proposed by Hase (1994, 51).

- What was the relationship between the royal v*illae* and the minster churches? Blair (2005; particularly 275-9) extensively addresses this question and he notes that it is not possible to 'perceive a clear-cut category' of royal *villae* and discusses how they can be identified. Turner (2006, 61-70) considered how royal *villae* can be identified in Wessex but importantly he also considered the spatial relationship between royal *villae* and nearby minsters.

- Is it possible to identify the large early *parochiae* associated with minsters throughout Somerset? This is an important issue given the evidence from elsewhere. For example, in Surrey (Blair 1991, 103-5) and around Southampton, Hampshire (Hase 1988, 46-7) early medieval

parochiae have been mapped across the whole area, whereas to date in Dorset the evidence shows only partial coverage (Hall 2000, 40-1).

- To what extent did Somerset's minsters develop into proto-urban settlements between the ninth and eleventh centuries and later into medieval towns? Blair (2005, 246-90 particularly 90) has discussed at length the concept of the 'holy city' and that during the late-eighth and ninth centuries the natural role of minsters as central places within the landscape became more evident. Using archaeological evidence Blair (2018) has revisited this issue and specifically considers it in relation to Somerset. His conclusions are that the minster at Glastonbury is the only one associated with significant evidence of settlement dated to *c*.600-850 AD and that none of the defensive burhs established by Wessex had developed urban characteristics between 870-950 AD (Blair 2018, 157, figure 49, 162-3, 275, 326, figure 120, 333 figure 122). However, many pre-Conquest settlements should be described as 'not-quite-urban' because they had coalesced from two or more rural settlements (Blair 2018, 350).

1.4   METHODOLOGY

This thesis has used Somerset as a case study to explore a number of research strategies and theories about how the Church developed. In progressing the research it became clear that the approaches previously adopted by other researchers were inadequate and would not enable the research questions listed above to be answered. A new approach was therefore developed and the first step was to choose sources of evidence which could be used systematically. Furthermore, it was essential to use evidence derived from the physical landscape using a landscape archaeology approach as used for example by Klingelhöfer (1992), Hase (1994), Corcos (2002), Calder (2004), Turner (2006a) and Pickles (2018). Effective use of data derived from the physical landscape, but also from historical sources, is dependent on asking the right questions of the evidence (Blair 2005, 2). In addition, it is necessary to accept that it is not possible to make assumptions based on a limited number of examples and that there may be no 'typical' place (Blair 2005, 2). It was

therefore critical to identify the questions that needed to be answered and then to identify the evidence needed to answer them. To date there has been no robust approach capable of identifying important early medieval churches, partly because the available evidence in each county is variable but also because the question being asked of the evidence is, which of these 'important' churches in a county were minsters when the question which should be asked is, which churches could have been minsters? The premise on which the assessment process used in this thesis has been constructed is therefore how can the minsters which are no longer important churches be identified?

A key element in completing this research has been to ensure that all possible sites of early churches in Somerset were identified before any conclusions were reached as to which were early medieval minsters. It was critical to begin by considering all the known nineteenth-century churches and chapels, rather than just those named as minsters or possible minsters by other researchers.

Therefore, to achieve this a wide range of primary and secondary sources was used to establish a baseline data set for all the churches and chapels for which there was evidence up to and including the nineteenth century. As the research progressed it was possible to identify those churches which were probably in existence prior to the eleventh century. This facilitated the identification of the churches most likely to have been important in the early medieval period. The multi-disciplinary data set thus collated then enabled an assessment of these churches to be completed. It is this comprehensive and inclusive approach which distinguishes this research into the early Church from that completed previously, when the starting point was frequently the 'known' or presumed minsters, rather than starting from first principles. The approach adopted echoes that previously recommended by Jeremy Haslam (1984b, xvi-ii) for identifying proto-urban places in southern England; that we need to ask: what do we know about the history of all the churches that may have existed in the early medieval period? To understand how the Church developed it was necessary to adopt this approach, only then was it possible to identify the distinguishing characteristics of the churches in existence prior to Wessex taking control of Somerset. However, as already stated, it was only possible to

identify the minsters after reconstructing the geographical framework within which they were sited, and critically, assessing the overall location and site of each church within the wider landscape.

An important source of evidence which assists in identifying the early parochial boundaries are the nineteenth-century parish boundaries derived from the Tithe Maps by Kain and Oliver (1995). However, it cannot be assumed that these boundaries equate to those existing in the tenth to eleventh centuries when parish boundaries were probably first established (Rippon 2012, 160). Prior to the tenth century the landscape in the South-West was divided into large *parochiae*, and before that into even larger early great estates. The first step in identifying these was to identify the medieval parishes as they facilitated the reconstruction of the pre-eleventh-century divisions within the landscape, including those of the early *parochiae*. This follows the process adopted by Turner (2006, 109-13) and Rippon (2012, 151-64, 199-200). It was the identification of the probable early parochial boundaries which has enabled the organisation of Somerset's early medieval Church to be understood.

Understanding why, when and how other researchers have used topographical evidence enabled it to be fully utilised in completing this thesis. The term 'topography' can describe various aspects of the landscape. Sometimes it simply refers to the layout of enclosures and settlements in relation to a church but it can also be used to reflect how a church is sited within the physical landscape; is it on a hill or in a valley? It is also important to consider whether discussions about the topographical setting of a church are purely descriptive or whether its setting is utilised as part of a systematic assessment process so that the topographical setting of several churches can be compared. This research uses the term 'topographical' in relation to how a church sits within the landscape and as part of a systematic assessment process to facilitate the identification of the topographical criteria which can be used to evaluate the origins of churches. This is the major differential between this thesis and the majority of earlier research into the post-Roman and early medieval Church. Topographical evidence has been key, without using it to establish the boundaries of the early great estates and their constituent early *parochiae*, and also as part of the assessment of individual churches, it would

not have been possible to successfully answer the research questions on which this thesis is based.

The intention in developing this methodology has been to ensure that it could be adopted elsewhere to facilitate a comprehensive and more robust understanding of how both the post-Roman and the early medieval Church were organised. The methodology has been tested by looking at a sample of churches in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset; these case studies are discussed in Chapter 7 (Section 7.3). Researching these churches has shown that the multi-disciplinary assessment process used in this thesis could be utilised across the South-West. It is hoped this will enable all the early medieval minsters in these counties to be identified for the first time as they have been in Somerset. The extent to which the same process might be adopted elsewhere, for example in Norfolk and Yorkshire, will be determined by the evidence available in those counties.

Importantly, the outcomes from this multi-disciplinary thesis are such that it will be possible to utilise a similar approach to complement research into the early medieval Church which has already been undertaken. As more of the early *parochiae* are mapped and the parochial minsters identified across the British Isles the more it will be possible to understand when, why and how decisions were made about the provision of pastoral care in the early medieval period.

1.4.1   *Significance of research outcomes*

When considering the pattern of ecclesiastical development, it is very tempting to think in terms of a systematic progression; a church was possibly a post-Roman church, then an early medieval minster which subsequently became a mother-church after the tenth century. Indeed, Blair (2005, 158) found that on the Gloucestershire / Warwickshire border only two late mother-churches had not been recorded as minsters. It is all too easy make assumptions about how the Church developed but churches were established for a variety reasons at different times and without establishing a comprehensive set of criteria it is impossible to reach a robust conclusion as to the origins and role of an individual church.

This thesis demonstrates the importance of using criteria based on a comprehensive inter-relational set of data which embraces evidence drawn from different disciplines: archaeology, architecture, geography, landscape archaeology and history. All these sources of evidence were important because they enabled a range of different types of evidence from the nineteenth century to the eleventh century, and indeed earlier in relation to topographical evidence, to be systematically collated in relation to individual churches. In constructing this data set the starting point was the 1840's Tithe Maps (Kain and Oliver 1995) coupled with the first edition Ordnance Survey maps. It was then possible to demonstrate, as the data set was systematically created, that the parish boundaries existing in the nineteenth-century had remained stable since the eleventh and twelfth century.

A weighting system for various evidence or elements of the data set using different types of data as counter balances to one another enabled a methodology to be created which enabled comparative assessments of churches to be made. For example, whether there was physical evidence which could date a church to the eleventh or twelfth century coupled with documentary evidence of churches in 1066/86. This particular collation of data enabled the identification of early medieval minsters which had lost significance.

Inevitably there were gaps in the data set because specific items of evidence for some churches was not available. Petts (2009), after exploring the development of the Church in early medieval Wales, sums up the issues which needed to be addressed. He makes the crucial point that it is necessary to view the Church as evolving through a variety of trajectories which differed widely according to the religious, social and political context in which it developed (Petts 2009, 51). He sounds a warning note to all researchers by reflecting on the difficulties of using scant and diffuse evidence:

> Whether looking at variation across time and space, we should not necessarily see such apparent 'patchiness' in the evidence as an inherent problem or weakness, but instead as a phenomenon which needs explaining and understanding. We need to be constantly aware that the underlying causes of this variation in the spread of evidence are important in themselves, and that this variation should be explored and understood rather than silently ignored or glossed over (Petts 2009, 51).

This statement by Petts exactly sums up the problems, and crucially the opportunities, inherent in the paucity of evidence that can be advantageous in understanding the development of the early Church. Indeed, it is the 'patchiness' and variations in the evidence, which includes 'patches' of similarity as well as of contradictory evidence, which has proved to be key in unlocking the multi-stranded trajectories underlying Church development in Somerset.

In conclusion, to be able to distinguish the minsters, mother-churches and lesser churches from each other in Somerset it has been necessary to systematically collate and document a wide range of information in order to explore the links and relationships between the different types of evidence. Therefore, to identify the pattern of Church development it has been essential to continually ask the question: how many churches can we expect to find? This has meant looking chronologically and systematically at church, not just minster, development on a site-by-site basis across the county as proposed by Corcos in 2002. The robust methodology developed in this thesis is such that it can be used to understand how the Church developed in other counties or regions and to test the conclusions already reached about how the Church evolved elsewhere.

1.5   STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The overall objective of this thesis is to establish the structure of the early medieval Church in Somerset by understanding when sites were initially chosen as religious focal points and how the role of the churches on those sites changed over time and it has been possible to meet that objective. Chapter 2 details the sources and methods used to complete this thesis, including how the baseline data set was collated. Chapter 3 explores the evidence relating to mother-churches and their chapels by providing a retrogressive review of the historical data that has been used from the eleventh to the nineteenth century. Chapter 4 details the systematic evidence-based process which enabled Somerset's pre-eminent early medieval churches to be identified by enabling any church or chapel to be scored for importance against a standardised list of evidence. Chapter 5 details how royal *villae* can be identified and how their importance can be assessed. It then considers the relationship which existed

between minsters and nearby royal villae. The chapter concludes by using the area around Yatton as a case study. Chapter 6 sets out the process by which Somerset's early great estates were identified and then looks at the relationship between the early great estates and their constituent parochiae. Finally, it looks at how the medieval pattern of archdeaconries and deaneries relate to the early parochiae. Chapter 7 then explores how churches are sited within the landscape and their relationship to nearby settlements through a series of case studies. Lastly, Chapter 8 includes twelve case studies of early medieval *parochiae* in Somerset.

The major conclusion from the case studies is that there are different trajectories of Church development across the county for a variety of reasons. These include political decisions to establish new royal *villae* and to demote others and pragmatic decisions by the major landholder within a *parochia*, for example Glastonbury Abbey. It is essential to accept that there is not one model that fits all churches or all counties, but a variety of interconnecting patterns of Church development. Whether this multi-stranded development process is mirrored in other counties is still to be determined.

Chapter 2

SOURCES AND METHODS

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the sources and methodology used to understand how the Church evolved in Somerset from the sixth century through to the eleventh century. Following the discussion in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3) it will be clear that understanding how the Church was structured and how it developed in the early medieval period is not straightforward. Furthermore, to date little progress has been made in identifying Somerset's early medieval minsters. The lack of methodical research across the county means that it has been almost impossible for researchers to identify its early churches.

The approach adopted to complete this thesis is multi-disciplinary, but it mainly uses two sources of evidence, historical dating from the pre-Conquest period, for example charters, to the nineteenth-century parish boundaries as mapped by Kain and Oliver (1995). The second source is topographical evidence, which is derived from analysing the landscape around churches, for example is the church sited on a hill or in a valley? The other evidence that is utilised to a much lesser extent is architectural, archaeological and morphological, the latter being concerned with how a church relates to nearby roads and settlements. The principle underlying this thesis is that the only way the development of the early Church in Somerset can be understood is to use a comprehensive, systematic and inclusive approach which starts by considering the possibility that any church which possibly existed pre-Conquest might have been a minster.

2.1.1   *Process and sources*

Initially a retrogressive approach was adopted which used historical, architectural and archaeological evidence; to work backwards from the known to the unknown. This is a well attested methodology which is summed up by

Caroline Heighway in relation to archaeological research into possible early religious sites:

> All the excavations have started from Romano-British sites, usually temples or villas, and worked forward. If ever they were Christian, they are by definition the Christian sites that failed. If we went the other way, starting with parish churches or better still, known minster churches, and worked back, very different evidence might emerge (Heighway 2003b, 62).

Currently, because there is no consensus as to which Somerset churches were minsters it is not possible to use them as the starting point, as Heighway makes clear it is better to start with a list of parish churches and then work backwards. Therefore, the initial retrogressive research began with the nineteenth-century parish structure, with the next tranche of evidence being derived from a late eighteenth-century history of Somerset (Collinson 1791).

The major complication in using this retrogressive approach is that most of the evidence is not contemporary with the early medieval period, plus it is all partial and incomplete for a variety of reasons. The only contemporary evidence which is available is that derived from early medieval [Anglo-Saxon] charters and King Alfred's Will. However, a major problem with the charters is that many of them are frequently not contemporaneous copies and in some cases, they have been fabricated to prove a legal point (Sawyer 1968, vii- xi) but in doing so they can still provide useful information. For example, Edwards (1988, 223-7) concluded that charter S265 dated 757 x 758 detailing land grants by King Cynewulf to the Bath minster was probably authentic, although with some corruption and minor alterations.

Therefore it is necessary to take an approach which embraces all possible sources of evidence, regardless of the extent to which they post-date the eleventh century. Indeed, some key evidence, such as parish boundaries and detached portions of parishes, date from the nineteenth century. It is only by taking this approach that the intricacies of Church development can be understood.

The main sources of evidence used by Michael Costen (1992a, 105-7; 143-57) to identify post-Roman (prior to 750) church sites and possible early medieval minsters in Somerset are listed below:

- the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Swanton 1997);

- the writings of Gildas (Winterbottom 1978);

- Asser's Life of King Alfred (Keynes and Lapidge 1983);

- William of Malmesbury's Life of St Aldhelm (Hamilton 1870);

- the Domesday Survey (Thorn and Thorn 1980);

- information derived from early medieval charters (Sawyer 1968);

- burial rights of parish churches in relation to free chapels;

- place-names (Costen does not state his source for this evidence but Ekwall 1960 is listed in the bibliography); and

- architectural and sculptural evidence (Foster 1988).

These are all important sources of evidence, but they do not take us far in understanding how the Church was organised, and above all, how it developed from the late post-Roman period, therefore using only these sources for this thesis would have been inadequate. Instead a broad multi-disciplinary approach using all possible sources of both primary and secondary evidence, regardless of their limitations, was adopted. These sources include key medieval historical evidence derived for example, from the Domesday Survey, the taxation of the Church in *c.*1291 (*Taxatio*) and the fourteenth-century bishops' registers. This evidence provided contemporary written information about the ecclesiastical history of each church. It is also important to take account of physical evidence, such as architectural, sculptural and archaeological information, because despite it being extremely limited it can provide strong incontrovertible evidence that a church did exist in the eleventh century. This information was accessed via a range of online databases, for example, Somerset Historic Environment Record (http://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/) and the relevant volumes of Pevsner (Foyle and Pevsner, 2011; Orbach and Pevsner, 2014). Up to date information about archaeological evidence was accessed via the annual Somerset Archaeology Report by the head of the Somerset Historic Environment Service (HER) published within the annual Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society.

This research has demonstrated the importance of the evidence and insights provided by topography, where a church is sited within the landscape and morphology, how it relates to nearby settlement. This evidence was assessed

using the 1st Edition and 1st Revision OS maps accessed via Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina. ac.uk/digimap) which was augmented by site visits to as many churches as possible, particularly those written about in detail. It is clear from historical research done elsewhere that understanding the geographical and spatial context of Church development is critical, for example, in relation to the nineteenth-century boundaries and detached portions of parishes which can indicate previous parish or *parochia* boundaries.

As the research progressed it became clear that in some *parochiae* there appeared to be a correlation between the long-term economic development of settlements and the importance of the churches sited within them. Therefore, consideration was also given to the function and importance of settlements in Somerset, using the Extensive Urban Surveys for example, as well as to the role and importance of the churches within them. It is important to understand the dynamics existing within each early *parochia*, firstly by establishing which Domesday Survey place was the most important in 1086; how this was achieved is detailed in Chapter 8 (Section 8.1.3). The settlement with the highest 1334 Lay Subsidy Return was then identified, followed by which settlement(s) Everitt (1967) identified as market towns at the beginning of the sixteenth century. It was then possible to identify within each *parochia* whether the Domesday place which was the most important in 1086 had retained its pre-eminence into the sixteenth century, and critically whether its church had been the early medieval parochial minster. Completing this assessment showed the extent to which a link existed in Somerset between its early medieval minsters and urbanisation. Understanding this issue is critical in establishing a broader understanding of the early medieval period.

2.2   ESTABLISHING A SET OF BASELINE DATA

To begin exploring the relationships between churches, and the history of individual sites, it is essential to establish a set of secure baseline data from which it is possible to work retrogressively backwards, from the known and proven evidence into the early medieval period. The major difficulty that needs to be confronted is the paucity of early baseline data. There is no major source

of primary evidence about Somerset prior to the 1086 Domesday Survey and this unfortunately provides incomplete data on the distribution of churches and chapels which existed in 1066/86. The first significant national information about churches and chapels is the record of tax collected by Pope Nicholas IV in *c.*1291 known as the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae Auctoritate P. Nicholai IV* (Astle, et al. eds, Record Commission 1802 a and b). Unfortunately, this too does not provide a complete list of churches and chapels because some were not taxed because their income did not reach the taxable threshold, and others because they were designated as non-taxable. Therefore, the first detailed and complete list of churches and chapels in Somerset is that provided by Collinson (1791) in the late eighteenth century. This was used, together with the nineteenth-century parishes identified by Kain and Oliver (1995), to list all the parishes, churches and chapels in existence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was against this list that all the information and evidence collected about each church and chapel was then collated, using an Access Database, to establish the baseline data set. Table 2.1 shows an extract from the database.

2.2.1 *Church records*

The *c.*1291*Taxatio*, despite its shortcomings, offers a systematic and comprehensive record of how much tax was paid by individual churches and therefore their relative importance within the Church hierarchy (Hall 2000, 4-5). The first available ecclesiastical records relating specifically to Somerset are the Registers of Visitations of Bishop Gifford from 1265-1266 (Holmes 1899), Bishop Drokensford from 1309-1329 (Hobhouse 1887) and Bishop Ralph from 1329-1363 (Holmes 1896). These registers provide useful information for example, details of pensions paid by churches and the mother-churches of chapels. As much data as possible was collated from the registers. However, they are a record of the issues considered by individual bishops and therefore the churches and chapels mentioned in the registers are only those that had come to the bishops' attention between 1265-1363. The approach used to establish the set of baseline data will now be detailed.

Table 2.1. *Example of the research data collated into the Excell database: reformatted extract from initial eight columns of the database for Long Ashton and Kilmersdon*

Church name	Dedication	Thorn & Thorn (1980) *DB* place	*DB* 1066	*DB* 1086	*DB* church	*DB* priest	*DB* memo
Long Ashton [late chapelry within AP was Whitchurch]	All Saints (*Taxatio* online & Coll., Vol. II, 299).	Ashton [, Long]	Three thanes held Long Ashton before 1066 (*DB* 5,34).	Bishop of Coutances held Long Ashton (*DB* 5,34).	True	True	Long Ashton paid tax for 20 hides; value in 1066 £12; value now £10 (*DB* 5,34). Of this Guy the priest held 3 hides; value 100s., of this 1 virgate belongs to this manor's church; a priest holds it (*DB* 5,34). NOTE: Welldon Finn & Wheatley (1969, 194) state that the priests have not been included in their list of priests because they were sub-tenants of Bp of Coutance, but he probably held the church & land as a 'rectory' & 'farmed' the land & church to the priests for the income.
Kilmersdon	St Peter & St Paul (Coll., Vol. II, 446-7).	Kilmersdon	Bp Peter [of Lichfield & Chester (T & T p.394)] held it before 1066 (*DB* 16,14).	King holds 1/2 hide in Kilmersdon.	True	False	Welldon Finn & Wheatley (1969, 194-5) state that Exeter text 'records a church at Kilmersdon'. Bp Peter [of Litchfield & Chester] held 1/2 hide; value 10s. It is now held by the king (*DB* 16,14).

2.2.2 *Churches*

Initially, the research focused on the identification of all churches. As already noted, any study of the early Church is in the main reliant on post-Conquest sources. This process of working backwards into the unknown earlier Church structure is very problematic. The most awkward issue is the tendency to make assumptions and to draw conclusions based on limited information. This is understandable given that much of the evidence is partial and incomplete because documents have been lost, for example most early medieval charters.

While other evidence is partial because of how it was collected, for example the bishops' registers. Sometimes the evidence is partial because there is only a remnant left of what did exist, such as the sculptural and architectural evidence of pre-Conquest churches. To facilitate working retrogressively it is important to identify the processes which generated change between the nineteenth century and the sixth century.

2.2.3   *Chapels*

There is no early comprehensive list of medieval chapels in Somerset because as Blair (1988b, 15) has stated, they were never systematically recorded anywhere due to their humble status. There is now a realisation that the chapels which can be identified only represent a small proportion of those that existed. In Worcestershire for example, a minimum of 180 parochial chapels have been documented between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, but of these less than 80 survive (Blair 1988b, 15). It is important to garner as much evidence as possible, however fragmentary, about chapels because elsewhere some have been identified as demoted minster churches, for example Tuesley in Surrey (Blair 1988b, 15). The distribution of known chapels in Somerset was recorded on a series of maps and these are discussed in Chapter 3. The sources of historical and physical evidence for both churches and chapels are discussed below.

2.3   SOURCES OF HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

The evidence used in this research is evaluated systematically from the nineteenth century back through to the early medieval period. This will be regardless of whether it is classed as primary or secondary evidence or includes both as in some online databases, for example, the Somerset Historic Environment Records (Som. HER). The South West Heritage Trust manage this database on behalf of Somerset County Council; it provides access to records of all the historical, architectural and archaeological data pertaining to the modern administrative county of Somerset. Some sources of primary evidence were used which are recorded in a different format from the original document,

for example the online *Taxatio* database (1802b; https://www.dhi.ac.uk /*Taxatio*/).

Some primary sources are partial, for example, the early medieval charters as many of them have been lost. They therefore provide a very incomplete record of pre-Conquest land grants and transfers. The main reason some charters have survived is because they were held by the monasteries of Athelney, Bath, Glastonbury and Muchelney and relate to land held by the Church. There are also partial sources of secondary evidence which date in the main from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These include the Victoria County History of Somerset (Somerset VCH) and articles published in the proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (SANHS).

2.3.1*. Key secondary sources*

Nine volumes of the Somerset VCH have been published since 1974 but it is still incomplete. These volumes provide detailed, well-researched and accurate information, albeit that most of it is derived from post-Conquest sources. Importantly, the Somerset VCH often provides information that is not otherwise available, for example, it is the only source which described Upton Noble as being a late twelfth-century chapel of Batcombe (Somerset VCH, Vol. 7 1999, 59-63). The VCH has, except for Volume 11, been accessed online (https://www.history.ac.uk/ research/victoria-county-history/county-histories-progress/somerset). The downside to this is that the page references are not precise as they refer to the discussion of a complete topi*c.* The eleven volumes of the Somerset VCH include all the information which is known about each parish that is discussed and this was used to augment other sources of data as appropriate throughout the research process. It is important to note that it has not been possible to replicate for individual churches and settlements the depth and breadth of research that is achieved when a volume of the VCH is being prepared, or indeed when detailed archaeological and historical research is carried out into a specific settlement.

The SANHS Proceedings provide access to a wide range of articles written about Somerset from the mid-nineteenth century. They provide detailed

information about archaeological and historical research in the county, but by its nature it only provides partial secondary evidence. Other sources of partial secondary evidence are reports of archaeological and historical research into specific geographical areas for example, the Polden Hills (Corcos 2002) and Shapwick (Gerrard with Aston 2007). It is important to recognise that in using these detailed sources of evidence there is a danger that they will skew how the, less detailed, evidence from elsewhere in the county is interpreted.

2.3.2 *Evidence and databases available online*

Evidence derived from primary sources, which are sometimes summarised and/or augmented by secondary evidence, were accessed online as were some secondary sources. For example, the Somerset Historic Environment Records (HER) which include archaeological evidence, historical information and personal comment. Other online databases used were:

- Church of England Heritage Records (https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/);
- Electronic Sawyer for early medieval charters (University of Cambridge) (https://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/about/index.html);
- Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record (https://www.exmoorher.co.uk/);
- Exon Domesday Book (https://www.exondomesday.ac.uk/ editorial-conventions/an-overview-of-the-exon-domesday-book/)
- Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516 (Centre for Metropolitan History) (https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb2.html);
- Halogen (University of Leicester) and the Institute for Name Studies for place-names (University of Nottingham) (https://halogen.le.ac.uk/query/kepn);
- Heritage Gateway (https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/);
- Historic Digimap which delivers online historical Ordnance Survey maps of Great Britain. The Collection is licensed from Landmark Information Group for UK Higher and Further Education (<http://edina.ac.uk/digimap);

- Historic England for listed buildings
  (https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/);

- Hull Domesday Project (University of Hull)
  (http://www.domesdaybook.net/home);

- National Library of Scotland (https://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch-england-and-wales/);

- Somerset County Council for the online version of their Gazetteer for
  Somerset (http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/archives/Maps/Smplgaz2.htm);

- Somerset Historic Environment Record
  (http://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/);

- Somerset Natural History and Archaeological Society for the index to
  their proceedings (https://sanhs.org/sanhs-proceedings/); and

- *Taxatio Ecclesastica* accessed via Humanities Research Institute
  (University of Sheffield) (https://www.dhi.ac.uk/*Taxatio*/);

- Victoria County History for Somerset, Vols 1-10
  (https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history/county-histories-progress/somerset).

These are the main online sources consulted during this research, but others
were also used, such as online versions of printed books or facsimiles, for
example *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae* 1300-1541. Introduction and errata, Vol. 12
(Horn 1967).

2.3.3   *Incomplete or inadequate evidence*

All the evidence used in this research, apart from that provided by Collinson
(1791), is incomplete because of how it was initially collected and/or collated.
For example, the Domesday Survey surveyors were not instructed to list all the
churches in Somerset (Thorn and Thorn 1980, 1st unnumbered page of
Introduction) and therefore the survey information about them is very
inadequate. Similarly, the nineteenth-century parish boundaries used in this
research are derived from the Tithe Surveys. These were completed in the main
between 1837-45 but were not concerned with establishing a list of churches
(Kain and Oliver 1995). As data was accrued for each church and chapel, by

working chronologically backwards from the nineteenth century, the evidence was always considered in relation to that previously established.

2.3.4   *Parishes in nineteenth-century Somerset*

Maps dating from the nineteenth century might seem irrelevant to research on the early medieval Church, but most of Somerset's parishes were already in existence in 1291 (Hase 1994, 73). Indeed, the evidence indicates that overall, there had only been minor changes in the parochial system between the mid-twelfth and the early nineteenth centuries (Youngs 1980, xvi-ii; Hase 1994, 73). However, the nineteenth-century Tithe Maps and Ordnance Survey maps, which are discussed below, only provide indicative evidence of pre-Conquest parochial divisions.

Obtaining accurate boundaries of parishes in England and Wales in the period before the nineteenth century is frequently impossible. This is partly because no pre-1840s maps are available for many parishes and partly because the maps which were drawn were produced for a specific purpose, such as mapping the land held by a particular individual, and therefore the parish boundaries were frequently irrelevant. In addition, the quality of the surveying completed prior to drawing these pre-1840s maps was often of dubious quality.

There are two important sources of nineteenth-century maps. The first are the Tithe Maps which provide the earliest official record of parish boundaries. The data on which these maps (Kain and Oliver 1995) are based is derived from the payment of tithes to the local church by those who owned land within a parish. These payments date from *c.*930 AD and became enforceable in *c.*960 AD (Morris 1997, 210). By the early nineteenth century the basis for the payment of tithes had become anachronistic and in 1836 the Tithe Commutation Act was passed (Kain et al. 1986, 1). To enable the tithes to be commuted a national survey was conducted and it is the detailed results of this survey which enabled Kain and Oliver (1995) to prepare the parish map for Somerset and to publish the nineteenth-century acreages for parishes which are used throughout this thesis. Importantly, the Tithe Maps provide a record of

the detached areas of parishes as they existed in the nineteenth century. These are particularly helpful in reconstructing earlier parish and territorial boundaries.

Tithe Maps for each post-1974 Somerset parish are available via the Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) database. These have been used when researching the history of individual churches and chapels to establish the nineteenth-century layout of their parishes (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2). Unfortunately, Tithe Maps for other parts of the county are not so accessible and it was necessary to ask the appropriate Heritage Service for guidance. The Tithe Maps despite being created for a specific non-related purpose provide the best quality evidence which is available of early parish boundaries and the mid-nineteenth-century settlement pattern around churches and chapels.

The second major source of nineteenth-century maps are the County Series 1:2500 1st Edition and 1st Revision maps published by the Ordnance Survey. Somerset was first surveyed by the Ordnance Survey in 1882-8 and subsequently maps were published at both six inch and twenty-five inch to the statute mile; these are classed as 'official' cartographic publications (Hindle 1998, 114, 126-7). Individual maps of settlements and their surrounding areas which are included within the thesis have been based on the historic OS maps because they were prepared using a standardised methodology. Where appropriate these maps have been amended to take account of information shown on earlier maps such as the Tithe Maps and private estate maps where these are available. These local earlier maps, particularly if they are on a large scale, can assist in understanding how the road network and settlement pattern had developed. However, the quality of the surveying was frequently inadequate and so they need to be used with care. The intention in amending the 1st Edition OS maps was to ensure they reflected the earliest possible layout of settlements.

2.3.5 *Parishes and their churches in eighteenth-century Somerset*

In 1791 a comprehensive parish by parish survey of Somerset was published by John Collinson called the History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset. This is an important primary data source as it dates from before the nineteenth-century land enclosures and therefore reflects the long-standing pattern of tithe payments. Collinson systematically detailed each parish and the churches and chapels within it. The information that he provides was based on a survey carried out by Locke (his dates were 1737- 1806, but the survey was not published until 1939). This survey is an important source of primary evidence for the organisation of the Church in the eighteenth century but much of the other information provided by Collinson is anecdotal and therefore needs to be treated with caution. Overall, Collinson (1791) is an exceptionally reliable source of evidence in relation to churches and chapels but there are problems with the text. A good example of this is his conflation of two Domesday Survey entries, the one for Holford [St Mary] (*DB* 25,38) and the other for Holford near, and within the parish of, Lydeard St Lawrence (*DB* 2,3; 21,83-4). The four entries relating to these two places are all given under Holford [St Mary] (Collinson 1791, Vol. 3, 457) but three of them relate to Holford near Lydeard St Lawrence which is now two hamlets, Rich's Holford and Treble's Holford. John Collinson (1791) often describes a chapel as having been long since destroyed, but frequently these chapels are not mentioned in either the fourteenth-century bishops' registers or in the *c.*1291*Taxatio*. This suggests that many of Collinson's destroyed chapels were later medieval in date. Some of Collinson's defunct chapels are mentioned by Frederic Youngs (1980), for example Trudoxhill, but frequently they are not. Youngs (1980, 433) states that, based on the boundaries of the Frome Hundred Poor Law Union, Trudoxhill was part of Nunney Ancient Parish (AP) before becoming a separate Ecclesiastical Parish (EP) in 1951 but he does not name Trudoxhill as a chapel.
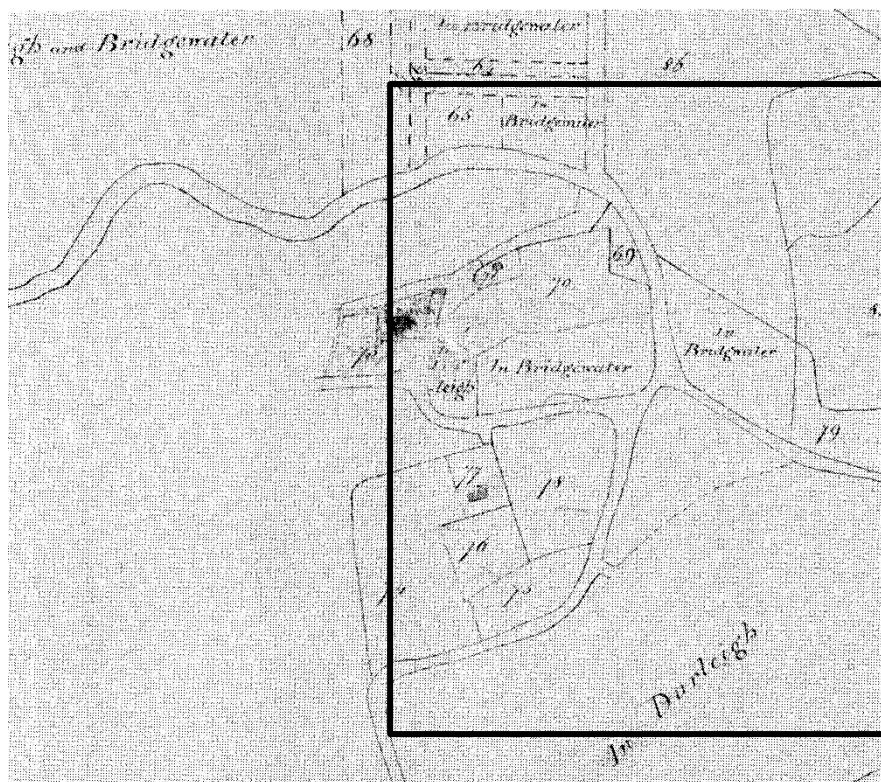
Figure 2.1.   *Photograph of the original Tithe Map for Chilton Trinity (apportionment 18th March 1839) for comparison with the same area (outlined on both maps) on the 1st Edition OS map shown below.*
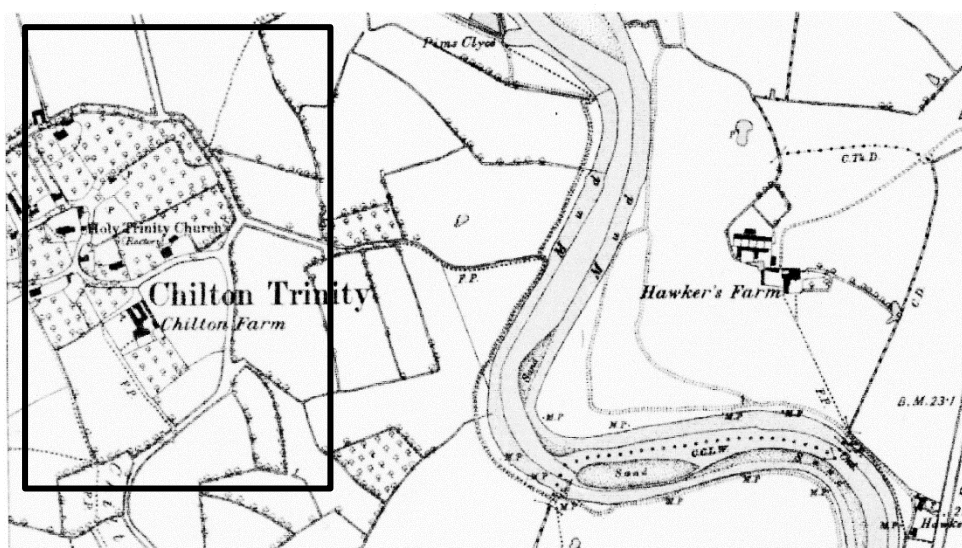
Figure 2.2.   *Illustrative example of 6-inch 1st Edition OS map for Chilton Trinity (Map L.NE; area surveyed in 1886 and map published 1887). These two maps illustrate the difference in the quality of the surveying and subsequent mapping between the Tithe Maps and 1st Edition OS maps.*

No map was prepared showing the churches existing in the eighteenth century, but the list provided by Collinson (1791) was used, together with the list of nineteenth-century parishes (Kain and Oliver 1995), to establish the base list of Somerset churches. In addition, the chapelries detailed by Collinson (1791) were included in the base list of chapels. Using these two quite diverse sources of evidence from the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries a clear picture emerged of the eighteenth to nineteenth-century parish structure in Somerset. From this it was then possible to work backwards into the sixteenth century.

2.3.6 *Parishes and their churches in sixteenth-century Somerset*

The next important source of information is a record of the administrative and ecclesiastical structure of Somerset from 1597. It was accessed using the data published by Youngs (1980) which he collated from official primary sources including:

- changes in the boundaries of parishes made by Orders in Council printed in the London Gazette;
- changes in the boundaries of dioceses made by letters patent from the time of Henry VIII until the nineteenth century and then from the Orders in Council;
- *c.*1530 *Valor Ecclesiasticus Temp. Henr. Viii. Auctoritate Regia Institutus* (Carey,1810-34); and
- *c.*1291 *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angeliae et Walliae Auctoritate P. Nicholai IV* (Record Commission 1802a; online *Taxatio* database).

These are official primary sources but overall Youngs (1980) needs to be regarded as being a partial source of evidence because, as will be discussed below, he uses the *Taxatio* which is an incomplete source of evidence. The data published by Youngs (1980, xvi) is widely recognised as an important source of information because it provides a comprehensive and systematic history of parishes, particularly those that he deemed to be 'ancient' because they existed before 1597. It is though vital to understand what 'ancient parish or AP' means in this context; that the parish was in existence in the sixteenth century, not that it was in existence in the post-Conquest period. Some of these parishes

undoubtedly existed in the twelfth century, but not all. Barrington AP before 1291 was, for example, a chapel of South Petherton and similarly Dodington AP was a fourteenth-century chapel of Nether Stowey (see Appendix 3). One of the valuable insights that Youngs (1980) provides us with are the indications of earlier parish structures or ecclesiastical relationships. For example, he refers to Easthams as a sinecure rectory within Crewkerne parish but before that it had been a reputed parish. In the nineteenth century it comprised 205 acres on a significant hill summit on the outskirts of Crewkerne and just below the hill summit is the cemetery for Crewkerne which is sited on land that the 1839 Tithe Map shows was held as part of the rectory of Crewkerne.

Another source of information about parishes in the sixteenth century is the Philimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers (Humphrey-Smith 1995). This is comparable to Youngs (1980) in that it is a compilation drawn from primary sources, baptism, marriage and burial registers. However, because some registers have been lost or destroyed the Philimore Index is a partial source of evidence because it was not compiled systematically from complete sets of registers. A comparative exercise of the parishes named in the Philimore Index (Humphrey-Smith 1995), Youngs (1980) and Kain and Oliver (1995), reveals that there is little difference between the Philimore Index and Youngs except in the spelling of parish names and those parishes not in existence in the sixteenth century. There are, however, differences between the Kain and Oliver (1995) parishes and those named by Youngs (1980); see Table 2.2.

Table 2.2.   *Sample comparisons of parish names showing variation in names between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries and that some parishes known in the nineteenth century, for example, Leigh [Leigh upon Mendip] were part of a larger parish, in this case Mells AP, in the sixteenth century.*

Kain and Oliver (1995) parish name	Philimore (Humphrey-Smith 1995) parish name	Youngs (1980) ancient parish [AP] name
Combhay [Combe Hay]	Combe Hay	Combe Hay AP
Cutcombe	Cutcombe	Cutcombe AP
Emberrow	Emborough	Chewton Mendip AP
Hungerford Farley [Farleigh Hungerford]	Farleigh Hungerford	Farleigh Hungerford
Leigh [Leigh upon Mendip]	Leigh on Mendip	Mells AP
Pitney [rectory in parish of Yeovil]	No entry	Kingston Pitney (reputed parish)

The base list of churches and chapels is therefore derived from Kain and Oliver (1995), although there are some exceptions which are discussed below.

2.3.7   *Parishes and their churches in fourteenth-century Somerset*

There is no list of churches and chapels available for the fourteenth century, so it was necessary to construct one as far as the sources allow using the published registers of visitations by Bishop Gifford (*Gifford*), Bishop Drokensford (*Drokensford*) and by Bishop Ralph (*Ralph*). The registers are a partial source of information because they are a record of the bishops' concerns and decisions and as such only record places which were brought to the bishops' attention. In addition; there are no records before 1265 and there is a gap between 1266 and 1308, the registers which were used then continue until 1363. They do not therefore provide a systematic or comprehensive record of Somerset's fourteenth-century churches and chapels. However, most of the churches known from the sixteenth century are recorded in the registers.

The registers, originally written in Latin, record all the decisions made by the bishops. The published texts have, in the main, been translated although some documents included within the registers are in Latin. The indexes of the registers were initially used extensively but it became apparent that they were not complete, particularly in relation to chapels. Therefore each register was read systematically so that as many churches and chapels as possible could be identified. The registers provide a range of information about churches, rectories, vicarages, chapels and financial dues, for example details of pensions:

> Bishop to Ibo, son of Maurice de Berkeley granting him an annual pension – 'Knowing his ability to be "fructuosus" [useful] to the Church, he grants 20 mks [marks], "de camera," until he is furnished with a Prebend' (*Drokensford*, 50).

Included within the registers is correspondence relevant to the decision being made by the bishop, for example letters between the pope and the bishop. This primary source of evidence frequently provides insights into previous ecclesiastical relationships (Croom 1988, 68).

The bishops' registers are a useful source of information about churches which may have been important early medieval minsters but which by the fourteenth century had lost status. This might be because they were no longer subject to episcopal jurisdiction and therefore had become 'peculiars', royal free chapels, or prebends (Morris 1997, 138), for example Wedmore (Greenway 2001, viii). Prebends were created in the main after the Conquest when a church was no longer considered significant and therefore deemed to not need all the income it was receiving from tithes and rents (Hase 1994, 76 fns 60 and 61). These churches were then annexed to the offices of capitular dignitaries, Crown servants or canonries so that the office holder had a source of income (Morris 1997, 138), as in the above extract referring to Ibo, son of Maurice de Berkeley.

A list of the prebends for the Diocese of Bath and Wells dating from 1066 was compiled by Greenway (2001, viii, xxvi-ix) from a variety of sources, including the bishops' registers. It is though known that not all the prebends have been identified. Most of the prebends were established to support the church of St Andrew's, Wells and date from before 1191 (44 out of 54 prebends) but they were largely the work of Bishop Robert (1136-66) (Greenway 2001, xxii). All the endowments of the dignities were:

> Derived from the pre-Conquest episcopal estate, as did all the twenty-seven prebends that existed by the end of Bishop Robert's pontificate. Some of the prebends – notably on the Combe [Combe St Nicholas], Wedmore and Winsham estates – were of the ancient type, being paid in money from farms managed by provosts (Greenway 2001, xxiii).

The prebends provide an insight into the changing status of churches and are therefore used in the criteria to identify Somerset's early medieval minsters.

Using the registers, it was possible to compile a list of Somerset's fourteenth-century churches and chapels and to identify the key relationships between them. Bishop Ralph's register, for example, shows that Seaborough was a chapel of Crewkerne in the fourteenth century (Holmes 1896, Vol. 2, 803 Ed. note 1639). It also, in conjunction with the list of prebends (Greenway 2001), enabled several churches to be identified as having lost status, for example Broomfield which in the late twelfth century was given as a prebend to St Andrew's, Wells by Matilda de Arundel (Bath *Acta* No. 149, 1174 x 1186).

The church was later an ecclesiastical donative and peculiar held by the prior and brethren of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England (*Ralph*, Vol. 1, 21-2, 224, 423) and not taxed. This loss in status by some churches proved to be key in understanding how the Church developed within individual early medieval *parochiae*.

2.3.8   *Churches and their chapels in c.1291*

In 1288 Pope Nicholas IV gave King Edward I the right to collect the taxes normally paid to the Pope for the next six years. The requisite list of churches, cathedrals and monasteries was based on a survey carried out in 1254 (Record Commission, 1802b; Morris 1997, 147) and is therefore a primary source of evidence. This list was accessed through the online *Taxatio* database which includes both the original Latin entries and an English translation, together with other relevant information such as church dedications. However, the latter are not necessarily contemporaneous as they are derived from later sources. It is important to note that the *Taxatio* list is not a comprehensive list of churches because it is known that those of little worth were not included and monasteries did not always itemise all the churches that they controlled (Morris 1997, 147; Jones 2000, 18).

There were also ambiguities in how the churches were recorded (Jones 2000, 18). Consequently, we cannot say for certain how many there were in Somerset when the survey was completed in 1254 (Morris 1997, 147). Some important churches had been 'granted as alien priories' (Hase 1994, 63) which also meant that their income could be appropriated while others were granted to absentee priests. Frome, for example was in the hands of Reinbald the King's Priest in 1086 (*DB* 16,1; see also Hase 1994, 63). It is known that as the Augustinian Order established itself in England it frequently took over existing religious sites, including in some cases early minsters (Robinson 1980, 28, figure 4, 33-6, figure 6). By *c.*1291 Chewton Mendip was held by the Augustinian Canons of Merton Priory, Surrey while Frome had been appropriated to Cirencester Abbey, Gloucestershire also held by Augustinian canons (*Taxatio*; Ross and Devine 1964-1977, xxix, xxx, 409, 814). This process of appropriation by the Augustinians continued and by the early

fourteenth-century Wincanton church, for example, was held by the Augustinian priory of Stavordale in Somerset (*Taxatio*). As a result of this research all three churches, Chewton Mendip, Frome and Wincanton have been assessed as being parochial minsters.

The *Taxatio* provides key information about the relationships that existed between the churches and their dependent chapels. South Petherton church, for example, is stated to have five chapels, Barrington, Chillington, Lopen, Sevington St Mary and St John's chapel which was confirmed to South Petherton church in 1213 (*Taxatio*, South Petherton, note 1). A comparison between the list of fourteenth-century churches and chapels, and those recorded in the *Taxatio* provided a baseline against which a list of the churches and chapels possibly existing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries could be evaluated. It is of note, that none of the chapels stated as being held by South Petherton church in *c.*1291 are recorded in the bishops' registers. This was probably because they were held by the prior and convent of Bruton and therefore not within the bishops' jurisdiction. This illustrates the partiality and difficulties involved in using post-Conquest primary sources compared to using physical evidence derived, for example, from how a church is sited within the landscape, about which there is no ambiguity only certainty.

2.3.9   *Diocesan records in the eleventh and twelfth centuries*

It is the episcopal *Acta* for the diocese of Bath and Wells from 1066-1205 (Ramsey 1995) which provides the primary evidence for the existence of churches and chapels in Somerset in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The episcopal *Acta* for the following dioceses were also consulted: Hereford's *Acta* for 1079-1234 (Barrow 1993), Salisbury's *Acta* for 1078-1228 (Kemp 1999; 2000) and Winchester's *Acta* for 1070-1204 and 1205-1238 (Franklin 1993; Vincent 1994). These compilations contain the episcopal charters from the eleventh to thirteenth century. The published *Acta* include both the original Latin charter and an English translation together with supplementary information.

It is uncertain that all the charters issued by the bishops are included in the *Acta* and critically they only include evidence of the churches and chapels about which the bishops' made decisions; therefore, they only provide an incomplete

source of evidence. Some of the decisions are notable, for example the decision by Bishop Reginald de Bohun to demolish the chapel of Hackington in compliance with the mandate of Pope Celestine III (Bath *Acta* Nos 104-6).

> Letter written with (Hugh), abbot of Reading, and Walter, abbot of Waltham, to the prior of Faversham and Master Ferraminus, repeating an earlier judgement (No. 103) and ordering them to demolish the chapel built at Hackington by Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury, to suspend from office and benefice anyone who presumes to celebrate divine service there and to dissolve the college of canons [*c.*20 July 1191] (Bath *Acta* No. 105).

This shows very clearly that some chapels had rectors and, also that some chapels were newly built in the twelfth century.

The Bath *Acta* enabled changes in the status of churches to be noted, including that Luxborough church had possibly been demoted (Bath *Acta* No. 20, 1141 x *c.*1142; No. 205, 1195 x 1205). The two charters mentioned above refer very clearly to Luxborough as a church, which previously had been identified as a chapel to Cutcombe (*Taxatio*). It is notable that both Luxborough and Cutcombe were held in 1086 by William of Mohun but in 1066 they appear to have been held by different owners (*DB* 25,27-8). The wording of these two charters is such that it appears the two churches were donated by different people, and it is therefore possible that it was the post-1086 ownership of the churches by William of Mohun that resulted in Luxborough becoming a chapelry to Cutcombe. The *Acta* have therefore enabled a list of Somerset churches known to exist in the eleventh and twelfth centuries to be compiled but when it is compared to those known to exist in *c.*1291, and even more so to those known to exist in the fourteenth century, it is obvious that the list is incomplete.

2.3.10   *The Somerset Domesday Survey:*
evidence of places and their churches in 1066/86

An early source of primary evidence for the organisation of the Church in Somerset is the Domesday Survey, which provides detailed information about land ownership, dues and responsibilities in 1066 and 1086. However, the survey does not provide a complete list of churches or clergy in Somerset, nor in any other South-Western county (Morris 1997, 142, figure 31), but the monasteries of Athelney, Bath, Glastonbury and Muchelney are all recorded

(Finn and Wheatley 1967, 196). There are also another 24 entries (see Appendix 6) which mention a church, land held by a church or priest, or a priest. There is a pattern of Somerset churches being detailed in the Domesday Survey where the holder of the manor and the holder of the church are different (this is the same as in Devon, see Holdsworth 1986b; Lomas 2009, 53, table 5, 63). For example, North Curry manor was held by the king, but Bishop Maurice held the church (*DB* 1,19).

A major source of secondary evidence and comment on Somerset's Domesday Survey including the Exeter or Exon version of it, which was recorded as the survey was undertaken, was written by Welldon Finn and Wheatley (1967) and this was used to assist in understanding the information included in the survey. In 2018 the Exon Domesday Survey became available online (https://www.exondomesday.a*c*.uk/editorial-conventions/an-overview-of-the-exon-domesday-book/) and provided some additional information for example, that Stogumber church was known as St Mary's, but it did not fundamentally change the information that had already been collated.

Welldon Finn and Wheatley (1967) were of the view that some priests mentioned as holding land and/or churches should be regarded as not performing any priestly duties. For example, Reinbald held the church of Milbourne Port (*DB* 1,10) but Welldon Finn and Wheatley (1967, 194) have not included Reinbald in their list of Somerset priests because he was a sub-tenant. Similarly, Alfgeat the priest held 1 hide in South Petherton from the king (*DB* 16,5) and is also mentioned in the Geld Accounts, but again Welldon Finn and Wheatley (1967, 194) state that the priest has not been included in their list of priests because he was a sub-tenant. It is possible that these priests were canons who held the land as an endowment to provide them with an income, rather than because there was a church there (Roffe 2007, 229 fn 87). Julia Barrow (2005, 18-20) has commented on the extent to which the purchasing of churches pre-Conquest was prevalent. It is therefore feasible that a church and its lands were held by an absentee priest, as indeed some rectors did in the medieval and later periods. Frome church with 8 carucates of land (*DB* 16,1) for example, was held by Reinbald a priest (*DB* 1,8). Welldon Finn and Wheatley (1967, 194) comment that the Exeter version of Domesday lists Reinbald as a

landholder and say that he was probably the Reinbald that held churches elsewhere. It is impossible to know whether there was a priest in South Petherton or Frome, but both had churches and therefore presumably there was a priest to perform divine service in them.

There are several entries stating that 1 hide was held separately from the rest of the landholding, for example in Ditcheat one hide (out of 30) is held by Aelfric and Evrard from the king (*DB* 8,30). Was this the church and its land, given that the lower part of Ditcheat church tower dates from the twelfth century (Som. HER No. 23384)?

The Domesday Survey for Somerset states that the lords of sixteen places were to be buried at Taunton (*DB* 2,3-4), while the slaves and cottars of a landholder could be buried at the local church or chapel (Blair 1988b, 13). This entry for Taunton is unusual, as are the other related entries (*DB* 2,1-2) because of the detail about who should be buried where and the payment of customary dues. What the entries do not contain is a specific mention of Taunton church or which of the places, detailed as requiring their lords to be buried at Taunton, had churches or burial grounds of their own (*DB* 2,3-4). These examples highlight the problematical nature of the information provided by the Domesday Survey and why the evidence it contains relating to churches is so incomplete, despite it being a major resource in other respects.

The Domesday Survey provides an essential source of secular evidence as to how Somerset was divided up between *vills* and manors in 1066/86. Stocklinch (*DB* 25,48; 47,14) is an example of how an estate in 1086 was split between two owners, Roger and Alfward (and his brothers), and later became two small parishes. Costen (2011, 122, figure 6.1) shows how the land was divided between Stocklinch Magdalen and Stocklinch Ottersey and it can only be described as complicated, probably due to how the land was bequeathed in the eleventh century or earlier. Some of these places equate to nineteenth-century parishes for example Lufton (Costen 2011, 133, figure 6.11), some to sixteenth-century parishes but not nineteenth-century ones, while others never became parishes. Some Domesday places later had churches, some only had chapels and others had neither. The Domesday Survey therefore provides

information which can be used as a comparator with post-Conquest data. Critically, it provides an interim baseline from which to work retrogressively back into the early medieval period.

2.3.11   *Historical evidence of pre-Conquest churches*

The primary pre-Conquest evidence is extremely limited comprising King Alfred's Will (charter S1507), in which a number of royal landholdings are bequeathed by the king to members of the royal family, and the early medieval charters which granted land to the Church. The charters and King Alfred's Will were accessed through several sources:

- online from the Electronic Sawyer (http://www.esawyer.org .uk/about/index.html);
- Anglo-Saxon Charters 13: Charters of Bath and Wells, Oxford (Kelly 2007); and
- Anglo-Saxon Charters 15: Charters of Glastonbury Abbey, Oxford (Kelly 2012).

The pre-ambles to the charters usually include information about where the charter was drawn up and sealed. This enables identification of the royal *villae* visited by the King. For example, a charter is thought to have been signed at Cheddar in 978 or ?968 AD (charter S806) to grant the renewal of the liberty of Taunton to Winchester Cathedral. The estates for which we have charter bounds 'were not typical of all estates in the [Wessex] region', being both larger than average and also in the main being owned by the Church (Costen 1994, 98, see also 106). It appears that only the important early medieval monasteries, Glastonbury and Muchelney for example, were granted land by charter (known as bocland), and not the local churches (Hase 1994, 61). The charters that have survived have done so because the originals, or copies of them, were kept in the cartularies of the monasteries.

The boundary clauses of the charters enable the identification of the estates owned by the Church, but it is unlikely they could be used to identify the estate around a church established by a secular landholder (Costen 1994, 97, 106). There are strong indications that the estates for which there are charters had a different social and economic history from those for which no charter exists

(Costen 1994, 97). It is essential therefore to ensure that where it is possible to establish the boundary of an estate this should be regarded as supplementary and not conclusive evidence. There are however strong indications that boundaries once established remained stable (Costen 1994, 106). Indeed, where the bounds of estates can be traced 'they are nearly all recognisable as units after 1086 and are often modern parishes' (Costen 1994, 106). It is only occasionally that the boundary clauses of charters provide information about churches because, by their nature, they are describing the boundaries of an estate when churches are usually found within it. If a church site is mentioned it is likely that it had already been abandoned by the time the charter was written, as at Bleadon (charter S804) where the site is on the side of a hill and apparently not part of the tenth-century settlement pattern (Costen 1994, 98). Overall, although the charters provide key evidence, about the boundaries of estates for example, the evidence they provide is limited and therefore needs to be interpreted with care.

2.3.12   *Evidence that can be derived from place-names*

The last source of historical evidence to be evaluated are place-names but unfortunately the English Place-Name Society has yet to produce a definitive volume for Somerset. Therefore, the interpretation of place-names in this thesis relies on the definitions provided by Watts (2004) and by the Institute for Name Studies online database (https://halogen.le.a*c*.uk/ query/kepn). The pre-Conquest charters provide evidence of place-names but as they are sometimes later copies or forgeries they may not always reflect the earliest name (Costen 2011, 32-3). Using the charters as a source of evidence is fraught with difficulties ranging from not demonstrating 'clearly the status or size of the sites to which they refer' to not being able to relate a place-name to a specific site (Turner 2006a, 16-8, see also Higham 2008, 98). There are several problems inherent in using place-names, for example, that it was usual for different versions of place-names to be written down to identify the same place. Critically, place-names which include words descriptive of the landscape are problematical because they are sometimes based on local dialects and therefore need to be considered in relation to the local landscape (Gelling 1984, 1-9; Copley 1986, 8-10).

In compiling the list of Somerset churches and chapels it was evident that it was usual to find that a place had several different names. Collinson (1791, Vol. 2, 26) frequently lists all the names of a parish known to him before he starts to write about it, for example he states that Minehead was anciently known as Manheve, Munheved, or Mineheved. The variation in place, church and chapel names was an ongoing difficulty and this is discussed below.

2.3.13   *Church dedications based on hagiographical sources*

A frequently discussed source of evidence for specific churches is the life of the saint to which a church is dedicated, but it is difficult to verify these hagiographical sources and therefore the lives are a poor source of evidence (Orme 2007, 5, 16-20; Petts 2009, 43-7; Turner 2006a, 8-9). In Cornwall many churches are dedicated to Celtic saints and frequently these dedications have in turn influenced the name of the associated settlement, for example Braunton named after St Brannoc (Higham 2008, 98-99). Unfortunately, the date when a church was dedicated can rarely be established (Turner 2006a, 9). The extent to which the dedications of churches in Somerset can be used, both to date their foundation and to trace their development, is limited because it is rare that there is dependable written evidence (Costen 2011, 179-83). A possible exception to this is 'the church of Cai', assumed to be on the 'Lantokay' estate near Street, which may have been dedicated to St. Kea, later corrupted to Cai (Calder 2004, 5-6). However, the only existing charter (S1249) which mentions this church is suspect although there is tenth-century evidence that such a charter did exist (Costen 2011, 182).

2.3.14   *Summary*

There is a wide range of historical evidence which can be used to facilitate a retrogressive analysis of how the Church evolved in Somerset. Despite these sources being partial they have enabled a detailed set of baseline data for churches and chapels to be established. Moreover, they have provided insights into the processes which underpinned the development of the Church. These sources do not, however, contribute very much to our understanding of how the Church was organised in the pre-Conquest period, nor do they establish how many churches and chapels existed in Somerset in the eleventh century. This

can only be rectified by looking at physical rather than historical evidence to understand when sites were first chosen to provide a religious focal point within the landscape.

2.4   PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

2.4.1   *Physical evidence for thirteenth century and earlier churches*

Records of archaeological investigations and finds have been used extensively to provide information about the physical existence of churches and chapels. These have been accessed online. The principal sources for post-1974 Somerset are the Somerset Historic Environment Record (http://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/) and the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record (https://www.exmoorher.co.uk/). For the northern part of pre-1974 Somerset it was necessary to use the Historic England Heritage Gateway site (http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/). In addition, for detailed information about the architecture of churches and chapels the following online database and publications have been used:

- Historic England - listed buildings (https://www.historicengland. org.uk/listing/the-list);
- The Buildings of England. Somerset: South and West (Orbach and Pevsner 2014); and
- The Buildings of England. Somerset: North and Bristol (Foyle and Pevsner 2011).

The comprehensive information that can be accessed online provides detailed evidence about archaeological research findings across the county. Unfortunately, as Chris Webster (2008b, 182) has highlighted, many key sites in Somerset have not been subject to extensive excavation, for example the site of the monastery at Athelney. Archaeological research information can therefore only be described as partial, but it can be successful in identifying early monastic and religious sites or burial sites. A good illustration of the importance of using archaeological evidence is the discovery ahead of ground works for a new power station at Hinkley Point of a probable early medieval cemetery in Stogursey parish (Reynish 2017; Som. HER No. 32771). Prior to the

assessment and excavation of the site in 2015 there had been no indication that a cemetery containing about 150 early medieval graves, based on preliminary radio-carbon dates, would be found.

The evidence from elsewhere indicates that the footprint or plan of early medieval churches varied considerably. It is important to note that most of them were not cruciform (Taylor 1978, 976-95, 1021-34). Lucy Archer (1999, 28, 34, 50-3) has argued that the construction of side chapels to form a cruciform church layout and the introduction of crossing towers, between the chancel and nave, can all be dated to the post-Conquest period. Consequently, any minster or mother-church which by the eleventh century had lost status is probably unlikely to have been provided with either a cruciform layout or a crossing tower between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Titchfield church in Hampshire (Figure 2.3) is a typical example of a late-seventh-century mother-church which has survived nearly intact (although it does contain later work) and crucially it does not have a cruciform layout (Historic England Listed Building No.1351279).

Teresa Hall (2000, 7-8) included in her criteria for identifying minster churches in Dorset pre-twelfth-century evidence of a cruciform plan and 'Saxon' architectural remains. There has been some debate as to whether buildings with cruciform layouts can be identified as important early churches (Corcos 2002, 75 fn 20). In Somerset some churches with a cruciform layout have been identified as parochial minsters, for example, North Petherton and Cannington (Som. HER Nos 10600; 10307). However, the key question to ask in relation to them is whether they have a cruciform layout because they were minsters, or whether it was because they were important post-Conquest churches. In addition, it cannot be assumed that their predecessor church, if there was one, had a cruciform layout.

Other key dating evidence for churches is provided by architectural and sculptural evidence and this was recorded for Somerset churches by Taylor and Taylor (1965; 1978), Foster (1988) and Cramp (2006). These three sources are only comprehensive in the sense that all the known examples of architectural and sculptural evidence have been documented. There is, however,

considerable debate as to the extent it is possible to date 'Anglo-Saxon'
architectural remains (Biddle, Cramp, Gatch, Keynes and Kjølbye-Biddle 1985;
Fernie 1991; 2003; Plant 2003). When Bannister Fletcher wrote his seminal
history of architecture in 1896 it was based on the 'comparative model', which
compared

> buildings of each period and by giving due prominence to the influences –
> geographical, geological, climatic, religious, social, and historical – which
> have contributed to the formation of particular styles (Fletcher 1945 [twelfth
> edition], vii).

Figure 2.3.   *St Peter's church, Tichfield, Hampshire; an example of a late-*
seventh-century church with an early medieval plan (author's photo).

 This comparative approach was also used in 1903 by Gerald Baldwin Brown in his seminal work on 'Anglo-Saxon Architecture' in early England (Fernie 1991, 38). Harold and Joan Taylor (1965; 1978) completed the next major cataloguing of pre-Conquest architecture which was published in three volumes. The approach they used to identify when a particular church, or architectural feature, was constructed, was based on stylistic analysis, assessing each architectural element 'as a separate entity … with neither cross-referencing nor discursive narrative' (Fernie 1991, 37). A review of the three volumes published by the Taylors makes two key points. The first is that of the pre-Conquest churches that were constructed less than 5% are still in existence, and notably, little contemporary written evidence about them survives. The second point is that until much more excavation and research into pre-Conquest churches has been completed it will continue to be difficult to date their architectural features (Biddle, Cramp, Gatch, Keynes, Kjølbye-Biddle 1985, 316-7). However, Eric Fernie (1991; 2003) challenged the methodology used by the Taylors and others to date pre-Conquest buildings and features. He was convinced that the comparative approach, previously adopted by Baldwin Brown, which related pre-Conquest churches and architectural remains to European architecture, would be more constructive in understanding and dating architectural evidence (Fernie 1991, 38; 2003, 204; see also Plant 2003, 215-6).

In Somerset the pre-Conquest architectural evidence which survives is a mere fraction of what originally existed. Consequently, little progress can be made in dating it more securely until more research is done elsewhere. Any dating of architectural features in Somerset must therefore be treated with caution and regarded as indicative rather than decisive. Some churches in Somerset do have in-situ early medieval and/or Norman foundations or stonework; the best example is at Milborne Port (Som. HER No. 54257). The building has a cruciform layout with a crossing tower, but the south chapel and the tower were built during the early medieval - Norman overlap period and it is therefore impossible to know whether the precursor church, of which only the chancel remains, was cruciform.

Many churches in Somerset contain fragments of sculpture or other architectural fragments which are displayed within the building or have been

built into walls constructed after 1066. Porlock church for example, contains fragments of an early medieval cross with interlaced ornament built into the west wall of the south aisle (Exmoor HER No. MS07874). It can be surmised that this fragment was from an earlier church in Porlock, however no site of an earlier building has been identified (Exmoor HER No. MSO7874). Therefore, it is important only to use such evidence as an indication that there was possibly an earlier church on a site. Similarly, there are many Norman fonts across the county and because there are so many they probably are in-situ. But this is not always the case for example, the Norman font in Rodhuish chapel was moved from Carhampton church in the nineteenth century (Exmoor HER No.MSO8630) and the original location of the Norman font in Aller church is unclear as it was retrieved from the village pond in *c.*1870 (Foster 1988; Som. HER No. 53481).

There is much to be gained from considering evidence that shows or indicates that churches and chapels physically existed before the thirteenth century and there is a lot of this evidence in Somerset. It is though important to note that some churches were first built of wood including the church at Glastonbury (Som. HER No. 23614; Morris 1997, 148-9). However, Blair (2005, 420) has argued that in Somerset, Devon and Cornwall there is 'nothing in the architectural evidence' which indicates that during the eleventh and twelfth centuries wooden churches were rebuilt in stone, although this was the case elsewhere. Chapter 3 (Section 3.2.6) includes a discussion about the usefulness of architectural and archaeological evidence, which together with other evidence, proved decisive in understanding the development of the Church in Somerset. Physical evidence that a site had an early church on it, or that a site was used for religious purposes, for example burials, is clearly important, but other physical evidence can be crucial.

2.4.2   *Topographical and morphological evidence*

Topographical and morphological evidence looks at how the site of a church relates to the wider landscape and to nearby boundaries and settlements (Conzen 1968; Roberts 1987; Blair and Sharpe 1992; Klingelhöfer 1992; Blair 2005; Turner 2006a; 2006c; Billing 2008). A topographical and morphological assessment of all the churches and the known sites of churches which were

identified as potentially important in the early medieval period was completed. This topographical and morphological assessment was based on the following:

- topographical setting within the physical landscape, topographical relationship between the church and, where the information is known, the likely, or known site of the associated early medieval settlement;
- the morphology of settlements; whether any early roads and/or surrounding 'early medieval' street pattern or boundaries can be determined;
- and whether the size and shape of the original church enclosure can be determined.

The sources of evidence used in this research, both historical and physical, cover many centuries and vary greatly in a variety of ways, from state records and papal Taxation records to Norman fonts and early medieval cemeteries. How that data was recorded and made accessible will now be detailed.

2.5   METHODS

Before the data collection process was undertaken a detailed plan was prepared to ensure that all the evidence was collected in a systematic and impartial manner. This reduced the risk of introducing bias into the process and ensured that the identification of Somerset's early medieval minsters was based on objective evidence, this is vital so that pre-conceptions, about which churches were minsters for example, could be disregarded. It is only by doing this that it is possible to identify those churches which were previously important but had lost significance by the tenth or eleventh century (Hall 2000, 17; Higham 2008, 100), or those which had gained importance. Recording all the available evidence for Somerset's churches and chapels was crucial in establishing a comprehensive set of baseline data. Without this it would have been impossible to reconstruct how the Somerset Church developed and the use of a robust, impartial and comprehensive assessment process of churches was critical to the outcome of this thesis.

2.5.1   *Management and recording of data*

2.5.2   *Initial collection of historical data*

The initial collection of information was managed as flexibly as possible and was recorded according to the name used in the source, rather than guessing its possible modern name. In some cases, this meant that the information for a church was initially recorded under more than one name. When the initial data collection had been completed all the entries were reviewed to identify which names referred to the same church. This variation in how place-names were spelt was inevitable given that the data was taken from a variety of sources dating from the eleventh to the nineteenth century. The initial collection of data was from the following sources, and in each case all relevant information was recorded: Collinson (1791), Youngs (1980), Kain and Oliver (1995) and the bishops' registers (*Gifford*; *Drokensford*; *Ralph*). This enabled a comprehensive list of churches and chapels to be compiled, regardless of their status, that existed from the nineteenth to the late-thirteenth century.

The variation in church and chapel names was an ongoing difficulty as many place-names derived from the landholder and in some cases the name of a place changed if the landholder changed, which made identification difficult. It is not always easy to identify places in the bishops' registers, even using the indexes, because of the large variations in spelling. It is also difficult to distinguish places which had similar, or even identical names for example, 'Wike' or 'Wyke'. It took some while before it was possible to be certain that all the entries for each church or chapel had been correctly identified and collated into one entry in the database.

Key variations in names were noted, but the names of places have been standardised using the nineteenth-century spelling used by Kain and Oliver (1995). When this has not been possible the Somerset gazetteer of the nineteenth-century names recorded on the OS 1st Edition maps have been used (SCC Gazetteer, 1987). There are several churches and chapels which were not listed by either of these sources in which case the eighteenth- century name

adopted by Collinson (1791) was used, or another relevant source, for example that from Bishop Ralph's register in the case of Wyke Perham chapel (*Ralph*, Vol. 2, 490).

An archaeological and architectural assessment using online databases was completed for each church and chapel. This systematic analysis showed very clearly that there are no complete early medieval churches in Somerset. There is though a great deal of partial evidence, for example at Shepton Mallet (Som. HER No. 24949) the only evidence of an early medieval church is a wall. The results of this assessment are discussed in Chapter 3 and have been mapped (see Figure 3.8).

2.5.3   *Recording documentary data*

When it was clear which information related to which church or chapel the information was brought together from all the sources to form one record. In recording the data, the source (and therefore the date) from which it was drawn was noted so that where appropriate the timeframe for the data was recorded. This is particularly important for chapels as there were often gaps in the evidence. All the documentary data was recorded using Access relational databases which utilise Excel spreadsheets.

2.5.4   *Creation of databases*

Prior to creating the principal Access database, a pilot database was constructed so that a sample of 20 churches could be analysed to evaluate how the data should be categorised. Then, to enable the database to be tested, the data from a different sample of 20 churches was entered. Test searches were then completed to ensure that it was possible to access the data as required based on the source of the data; for example, that it was possible to list parishes according to their nineteenth-century acreage, or to list chapels according to their mother-church. This enabled any glitches in the construction of the database to be identified and corrected. How the database was constructed was kept under review and adjustments made to ensure that it remained fit for purpose. An example of a base entry sheet giving a limited

amount of information for a chapel is shown in Figure 2.4, while Figure 2.5 shows other data for Bathealton in a different format.

All the initial data was then entered into the principal database which was divided into two main tables: churches and chapels. As the research progressed it was sometimes unclear whether a religious building should be classed as a church or a chapel, in which case a cross-referenced entry was made in both tables. At a later stage it was sometimes possible to decide whether it was a church or chapel in accordance with the earliest entries for it and the alternative entry was then deleted. As more data was collated other chapels were identified and entries were created for them. How the data in these databases are viewed, and indeed entered into the database, is variable. Forms, data sets and tables can be designed for specific purposes but to be able change how the data is viewed it is important to ensure that it is entered into the database in a discrete manner. For example, it would not be possible to sort churches according to their nineteenth-century acreage unless the acreage for each parish had been recorded as single piece of a data in a specific field.

As the research progressed additional entry fields were created. In addition, check boxes were added to the database so that it was possible to produce lists. All the information from the bishops' registers was entered in one field for example, but at a later stage a check box for fourteenth-century churches was created, this could then be used in the construction of summary tables to track the evidence for individual churches.

2.5.5 *Initial data analysis*

Once the initial collection of data had been completed and recorded in the database the next step was to establish which churches and chapels might date from the early medieval period. Therefore, any churches or chapels which it was clear post-dated the sixteenth century were removed from the database.

The initial analysis of the data was then completed using a range of tables, some of which are included in the Appendices. Each table was constructed by creating a data sheet in the database which incorporated the required information. A new Excel spreadsheet was then opened and each column in the

data sheet was copied and transferred into the Excel spreadsheet to create the required table. The table was then formatted and amended as necessary.

Chapel Data memos

Chapel_19thC_Name
Bathealton (see Church entry because status is unclear)

Also_Thorn_and_Thorn_Place   Chapel=AP
Bathealton   ☑

Memo_Type_Chapel
Possible demoted church as had rector. Prebendal chapel - later in 14thC described as parish church

1291_Chapel   Drok_Chapel   Ralph_Chapel
☐   ☐   ☑

Gen_Primary_Evidence_Post-1066_Memo
Rector (Drok., 4). Order to Archdeacon of Taunton from official of the court of Canterbury re: 'vacancy of the prebendal CHAPEL of Badialton pertaining to your prebend of Milverton (Ralph, Vol. IX, 342). William Moyhun instituted to the Bathealton church (Ralph, Vol. IX, 342). NOTE later described as parish church: priest instituted to parish church following presentation by prior & convent of Taunton (Ralph, Vol. X, 543). Priest admitted to parish church & rectory at the presentation of Ralph de Pouleshull (Ralph, Vol. X, 753). Bathealton AP (Youngs).

2nd_Sources_Evidence
Rectory & peculiar; dedicated to St Bartholomew (Coll., Vol. III, 22-3).

Figure 2.4.   *Example of a database form which includes information for Bathealton which may have been either a church or a chapel.*

Chapel	Mother-church	Earliest Reference to Chapel		Holder of Mother-church c.1291	Deanery
Baltonsborough (12thC church)	Butleigh	B4	12thC church - VCH	Glastonbury Abbey	Pawlett
Barrington	Petherton, Sout	C1	1291_Taxatio	Bruton Priory	Crewkerne
BATH [St James] (AP1 see Church entry because status is unclear)	Bath [St Peter &	F	16thC Youngs	Bath Cathedral Priory	Bath
Bathealton (see Church entry because status is unclear)	Milverton	E	14thC Ralph	Bp of Bath & Wells	Wells Cathe
Bayford [OS 1st series] [Boyford]	Stoke Trister [	E	14thC Ralph	Not listed in Taxatio	Unknown
Beckery [OS 1st series] [Beokery]	Glastonbury Ab	A3	VCH - pre-1066	Glastonbury Abbey	Unknown
Bickenhall	Staple-Fitz-payn	F	16thC Youngs - Count of Mortain held b	Montacute Priory in early 12thC	Crewkerne
Bicknoller [OS 1st series] (see Church entry because status is	Stogumber [Sto	F	16thC Youngs	Secular College, Wells Cathedr	Dunster
Biddisham [prev. Tarnuc (Coll.)]	Wedmore	C1	1291_Taxatio	Bp of Bath & Wells	Wells Cathe
Binegar (see Church entry because status is unclear)	Whitchurch [Filt	D	14thC Drok.	Bp of Bath & Wells	Wells Cathe
Bishops Hull	Taunton [St Mar	C1	1291_Taxatio	Taunton Priory	Taunton

Figure 2.5.   *Example of a database form highlighting a different set of information about Bathealton.*

- 91 -

In some tables the list of churches incorporates a system of colour coding which relates to the 1066 landholder of the Domesday Survey place where the church is situated. This is of benefit when considering whether the landholder in 1066 is relevant to the data included in the table. All the maps which explore the evidence are included in the relevant chapters. In addition, Appendix 1A contains a map which identifies each parish according to the number allocated to it by Kain and Oliver (1995, 430-1, figure 42). The key to the numbers allocated to parishes is given in Appendix 1B.

The results of the initial retrogressive analysis of the data from the nineteenth century to the eleventh century is discussed in Chapter 3. The discussion includes an assessment of which churches existed in *c.*1066. The identified pre-Conquest churches have been mapped (see Figure 3.8) but due to the paucity of historical evidence it is not possible to provide a definitive list of the churches that existed in the eleventh century. To identify the important early medieval churches a different approach was required which combined historical evidence with topographical and morphological evidence; this is discussed in Chapter 7.

2.5.6   *Detailed analysis of data*

The final analysis of the data addressed the following research objectives, to:

- consider whether a relationship existed between the late post-Roman churches (those in existence by the mid-seventh century) of Somerset and the siting of churches existing in the early medieval period;

- ascertain whether there was a correlation between estate centres (royal *villae* for example) and their associated territories, and the development of the Church;

- clarify the hierarchy of early medieval churches in Somerset; and therefore to

- reconstruct the broad chronology of Church development in Somerset from the late post-Roman period to the eleventh century.

To facilitate these objectives a series of criteria based on historical and physical evidence were developed. These were used to establish which churches were likely to have been significant during the early medieval period. As part of this process a system of weighting was constructed in relation to specific types of data (see Hall 2000, 4-8 for her weighting system). By weighting each criterion, it is possible to identify which churches were significant in the early medieval period. To achieve this, it is necessary to include criteria which identified those churches which had lost significance between the late post-Roman and early medieval periods. Tables using these criteria were then constructed and the data mapped, the results of this research are discussed in Chapter 4.

The list of churches identified as being significant during the early medieval period were then assessed against a list of topographical and morphological criteria as discussed in Chapter 7. A further set of criteria based on historical, topographical and morphological evidence was then constructed to enable the identification of Somerset's post-Roman and early medieval minster churches. These sites were mapped together with the main geographical and topographical features of the county. The conclusions drawn from this research are then discussed in Chapter 8.

So that it is possible to understand how the Church was organised in the late post-Roman period it was important to identify the early great estates into which Somerset was divided. This is crucial as:

> A more thorough study of the early estates of the Saxon [early medieval] bishoprics, coupled with the relationships between churches, may well be revealing in the search for British Christianity (Hall 2003, 55).

There has been a great deal of discussion about early territorial boundaries being influenced by topography and this is discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.2-3). It is the views of Eric Klingelhöfer (1992, 89-91, 113-9) which are probably the most relevant to this thesis with his identification of what he terms 'archaic hundreds' in Hampshire. These are centred on valley catchment areas with geographic and topographically derived boundaries (Klingelhöfer 1992, 118; see also Hall 2000, 28, 47).

By mapping the churches identified as being significant within the geographic and topographical boundaries of Somerset it is possible to delineate

the boundaries of the early medieval *parochiae*. It is only by reconstructing these *parochiae* that it was possible to securely identify the early medieval parochial minsters. This research has clearly identified that there is a relationship between the boundaries of the early great estates, the early medieval minster *parochiae* and the medieval archdeaconry and deanery structure. These relationships are discussed in Chapter 6.

2.6   CONCLUSION

It will now be clear that a range of quite disparate sources were utilised for this thesis. Each source has a valuable contribution to make but because they date from the eleventh to the nineteenth century, and in some cases must be described as transcribed secondary sources of evidence, they need to be interpreted with care. In some instances, the paucity of the information that they provide causes considerable difficulties in the task of reaching a definitive list of parishes, churches and chapels.

The method adopted to complete this research is based on retrogressive analysis using a systematic, comprehensive and impartial approach which enabled the identified research objectives to be successfully addressed. It is important to state that no prior judgements were made based on supposition, or assumed criteria, and no evidence was excluded. This is vital given that we know much of the evidence for the early medieval period is variable, scant and diffuse and is all partial to a degree. By establishing a firm set of baseline data it is possible to work backwards using all the available sources of evidence. It is these, despite in some cases being very fragmentary, which enabled the history of Somerset's early medieval Church to be understood.

This approach made it possible to recognize the processes which underpinned the development of the early medieval Church. Crucially, it is only possible to understand the changing structure of the Church by understanding the drivers which brought about change.

Chapter 3

PROCESS AND CHANGE:
THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CHURCH IN SOMERSET

3.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the historical, architectural and archaeological evidence that was used to complete a retrogressive review of Church development in Somerset. The evidence for Somerset's churches and chapels in the nineteenth, sixteenth, fourteenth, late-thirteenth, twelfth and eleventh centuries is discussed sequentially. The objective of this retrogressive review is to explore the extent to which the organisation of the Church was in a continual state of flux. It will also consider the extent to which the evidence can elucidate the changing status of churches over time in order to identify the early medieval minsters which lost status as highlighted by John Blair (2005, 364-7). All the places discussed in detail in this chapter have been mapped; see Figure 3.1.

As already discussed (Section 1.3), there is no consensus as to which Somerset churches should be regarded as important early medieval foundations. David Hill (1989, 155-7) for example, does not list Bruton as a minster, while Mick Aston (1986, 75-6), Patrick Hase (1994, 47-81) and Michael Costen (1992, 143-57; 2011, 223) all do. However, Aston (1986, 75-6), Hill (1989, 155-7), Costen (1992, 143-57; 2011, 223) and Hase (1994, 47-81) all agree that Cheddar, Crewkerne, Glastonbury, Ilchester, Muchelney and Wells were minsters. Overall, though, researchers have expressed a diversity of views about which Somerset churches should be classified as early medieval minsters, as shown in Table 3.1.

Figure 3.1.   Key places mentioned in Chapter 3

1. Bath
2. Bathealton
3. Bedminster
4. Bicknoller
5. Bruton
6. Cannington
7. Chard
8. Cheddar
9. Chewton Mendip
10. Combe St Nicholas
11. Crewkerne
12. East Pennard
13. Frome
14. Glastonbury
15. Ilchester
16. Langford Budville
17. Milborne Port
18. Milverton
19. Monkton
20. Moorlinch
21. Muchelney
22. North Petherton
23. Pikewell
24. Queen Camel
25. Rowington
26. Seaborough
27. Shapwick
28. Somerton
29. Stogumber
30. Stogursey
31. Stoke Trister
32. Street
33. Taunton
34. Walton
35. Wellington
36. Wells
37. West Buckland
38. Winsham
39. Yatton

Detached areas of parishes

Scales

Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

Table 3.1.   *Churches previously proposed as minsters or probable minsters by other researchers (Aston 1986, 75-6; Hill 1989, 155-7; Costen 1992, 143-57; Hase 1994, 47-81; and Costen 2011, 177-224).*

	Aston (1986, 75-6)	Costen (1992, 143-57)	Costen (2011, 223)	Hase (1994, 47-81)	Hill (1981, 155-7)
Aller	Minster	Poss.minster	Church	-	-
Athelney	-	Minster	-	-	Minster
Banwell	Poss.minster	Minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Church
Bath	Poss.minster	Minster	-	Prob.MC	Minster
Bedminster	Minster	Poss.minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Bruton	Poss.minster	Prob.minster	Minster	Prob.MC	-
Cannington	Poss.minster	Prob.minster	Minster	Prob.MC	-
Carhampton	Church	Prob.minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Cheddar	Minster	Minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Chew Magna	Poss.minster	-	-	Prob.MC	-
Chewton Mendip	Poss.minster	Poss.minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Congresbury	Church	Minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Crewkerne	Minster	Minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Curry Rivel	Church	Poss.minster	Minster	Prob.MC	-
Doulting	Poss.minster	Church	Church	Prob.MC	-
East Pennard	Poss.minster	Church	Church	Poss.MC	Minster
Frome	Church	Minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Glastonbury	Minster	Minster	-	Prob.MC	Minster
Ilchester	Minster	Minster	-	Prob.MC	Minster
Ilminster	Church	Minster	Church	Poss.MC	Minster
Keynsham	Poss.minster	Church	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Kilmersdon	Poss.minster	Poss.minster	Church	-	Minster
Long Ashton	Poss.minster	Church	Church	-	Minster
Martock	Prob.minster	Poss.minster	-	Poss.MC	-
Milborne Port	Church	Minster	Minster	Poss.MC	Church
Milverton	-	-	Minster	-	-
Muchelney	Minster	Minster	-	Prob.MC	Minster
North Curry	Poss.minster	Prob.minster	Minster	-	Minster
Northover	-	-	Minster	Prob.MC	-
North Petherton	Poss.minster	Church	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Pitminster	Minster	Church	Church	-	Minster
South Petherton	Prob.minster	Prob.minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
St Decumans	Poss.minster	-	Poss.minster	Prob.MC	-
Stogumber	Poss.minster	Prob.minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Taunton	Poss.minster	Minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Church
Wells	Minster	Minster	Minster	Prob.MC	Minster
Yatton	-	Minster	Minster	-	-

KEY: MC - mother-church;   Prob.MC - term used by Hase is 'certain or likely' rather than probable;   Poss. – possible;   Prob. – probable.

This lack of consensus raises several questions, the key one being: if certain churches were regarded as minsters and therefore important, why and how has that knowledge been lost? In order to answer this question, it is therefore essential to consider the processes by which churches, and also chapels,

gained and lost significance. In order to explore the difficulties inherent in answering this question the history of Somerton church will be considered, see Figure 3.2.
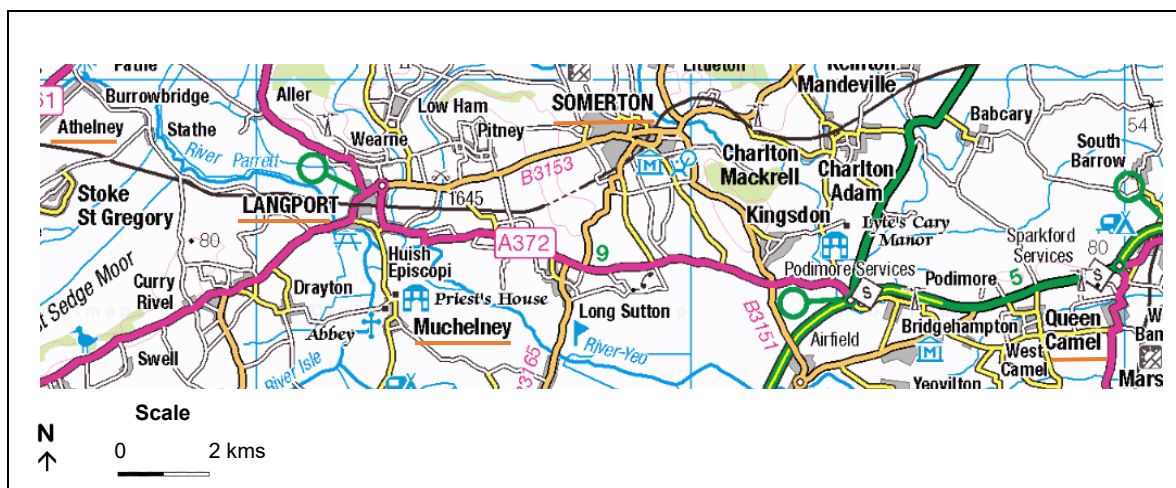
Figure 3.2.   *Map of area around Somerton, showing relationship with Athelney, Langport, Muchelney and Queen Camel. OS base map downloaded from Digimap (<http://edina.ac.uk/digimap) [accessed January 2021].*

The changing status of Somerton church is a good example of how the importance of a particular site did not remain static and how its income might be granted away, as shown by the evidence below dated from the tenth century and later.

King Æthelred to Athelney Abbey; grant of tithes from the royal estate at Somerton, Somerset, said on the authority of Archbishop Dunstan to have been previously instituted by King Alfred (probably in 994; charter S832a).

Somerton was one of the important royal manors before the Conquest and included the town of Langport, with its dependencies. Somerton was paying half a night's revenue to the king together with £79 10s 7d a year at 20 pence to the ora (*DB* 1,1).

By the early twelfth century Somerton belonged to the Crown and was a chapelry of Queen Camel and remained so until *c.*1140 when the Empress allowed Somerton church burial rights and made it, in its turn, a mother-church (Somerset VCH Vol. 3, 1974, 129-53, fns 522 and 524; Record Commission 1818, Vol. 2, 122).

Then between 1174 x 1191 the monks of Muchelney received confirmation of their ancient rent of 35s a year from the church of Somerton, with the addition of a further 5s (Bath *Acta* No.146).

Confirmation was given in 1195 x 1205 of William de Erlegh's grant to the abbot and monks of Athelney Abbey of the whole of the tithe of Somerton church (Bath *Acta* No. 81a).

> Between 1197 x 1205 it was confirmed that the monks of Muchelney were entitled to their ancient share in the sheaves of the church of Somerton (Bath *Acta* No. 239).

> The *c.*1291 *Taxatio* shows that Somerton church was valued at £25 0s 0d and had been appropriated to Muchelney Abbey.

There is detailed information about Somerton in the Domesday Survey but there is no evidence that the church existed pre-Conquest or in 1086. It is important to note that Somerton parish and its church meet several of the criteria set out by Teresa Hall (2000, 7; see Section 1.2) to assess which Dorset churches should be classified as early medieval minsters:

- its nineteenth-century parish acreage exceeded 5,000 (all acreages are derived from Kain and Oliver 1995);

- it was in royal ownership in 1066/86;

- it had dependent chapels, albeit within its parish;

- it was taxed in *c.*1291 by more than £20; and

- probable Roman burials were found in the garden of the vicarage which is adjacent to the church (Som. HER No. 54532).

Somerton meets the above criteria but cannot meet another three of Hall's minster criteria which are based on architectural features because the thirteenth-century tower is the earliest part of the building (Som. HER No. 54478). Indeed, Somerton church has not been considered as a possible minster by previous scholars (Aston 1986, 75-6; Hill 1989, 155-7; Costen 1992, 143-57; Hase 1994, 47-81; Costen 2011, 175-224). The possibility that Somerton had a minster must be considered as it was aligned with one of the most important royal estate centres in 1066 (*DB* 1.1) which Costen (2011, 186; 223-4) has stated to be true of most minsters in Somerset, however he did not identify it as a minster. It is also possible that Somerton church began initially as a royal chapel, or an early monastery, or even as a post-Roman church? Given that, as Table 3.1 demonstrates, there is no current scholarly consensus about which churches in Somerset should be classified as early medieval minsters, we need to consider how many other possible lost minsters there might be, and by what criteria they could be identified.

3.1.1 *Post-Conquest mother-churches and their chapelries*

Theresa Hall (2000) and other researchers have identified a correlation between post-Conquest mother-churches with dependent chapelries and early medieval minsters and have used this evidence as a determinant of minster status. Whether this correlation should be adopted as a criterion needs to be reconsidered because it is only valid if the starting point is a list of the minsters in a county, rather than a list of mother-churches. The criterion would not be valid because the list being used would not include any minsters which had not become mother-churches.

John Blair's work on Oxfordshire minsters led him to state that in the western and central parts of the county there exists a

> close correlation between recorded Anglo-Saxon minsters and later medieval mother churches exercising parochial rights over several daughters [or chapelries] (Blair 1994, 69).

Theresa Hall (2000, 7) subsequently used dependent chapelries as one of her criteria for identifying minsters in Dorset. However, Simon Draper (2006, 82) came to the view, based on his work in Wiltshire, that dependent chapelries 'cannot be regarded as a sure indicator of Anglo-Saxon minster status'. Nor is he alone in his scepticism. In 2005 Blair forcibly challenged whether it can always be assumed that a mother-church was also necessarily a pre-Conquest minster:

> A further problem arises from some historians' practice of using 'minster' to mean a parochial mother-church identified from post-Conquest sources, even when there is no direct evidence that it had housed a religious community. Given that so many early minsters did in fact survive as late mother-churches, this usage must often be correct, but in individual cases it can certainly be criticized for turning hypothesis into assumption (Blair 2005, 3-4).

If later chapelries held by mother-churches are used as one of the criteria to identify minsters, should all chapels, regardless of the earliest date that can be established for them, be considered to meet the criteria? As discussed in Chapter 2 (Sections 2.2.3 and 2.3.5-2.3.9) the evidence for chapelries is frequently incomplete and it is often impossible to trace a continuous relationship between a chapel and its mother-church. These relationships can be difficult to interpret because there is evidence (see Appendices 3 and 4) that

sometimes a chapel had previously functioned as a church, and indeed that some chapels later became parish churches. A further complication is that some chapels were overseen at various times by more than one mother-church. For example, Langford Budville is listed as a chapel of Milverton in the sixteenth century (Youngs 1980), but as a chapel of Rowington [Runnington] in the fourteenth century (*Ralph*, Vol. 2, 663). It is of note that there is a disparity in size between these two parishes with Langford Budville being considerably larger than Rowington. Somerton was briefly a chapelry of Queen Camel as there is one post-Conquest reference to this (Somerset VCH Vol. 3, 1974, 129-53, fn. 522: Record Commission 1818, Vol. 2, 122), but as can be seen above, it is likely that this was a fleeting association established for pragmatic reasons. These examples of mother-church and chapel relationships illustrate the importance of knowing the date at which these relationships originated. In the case of Langford Budville, it may have been a pragmatic decision because there was a shortage of priests due to the Black Death. The reference to Langford Budville clearly states that the rector was licenced so that

> he could celebrate one mass every day in the chapels of Langeford or Thorne St Margaret, notwithstanding that he shall first have celebrated in the church of Rimyngton [Runnington] (*Ralph*, Vol. 2, 663).

There are though churches such as Chewton Mendip which appear to have simple and long-lasting relationships with their chapelries:

> Institution, at the presentation of the abbot and monks of Jumièges, of Master Alan de Cretton to the church of Chewton [Mendip] with the chapels of Emborough, Easton [Major], Farrington [Gurney], Paulton, Ston Easton and Hallatrow (Bath *Acta* No. 231, 1192 x 1205).

In the sixteenth-century Chewton Mendip still retained the chapels (Youngs 1980) it had in the late-twelfth to early-thirteenth century. However, no chapels are listed for Chewton Mendip in the *c.*1291 *Taxatio* (see Appendix 3) which illustrates how the historical record for a chapel can be incomplete. Whether this pattern of chapelries existed pre-Conquest needs to be evaluated based on the evidence provided by the Domesday Survey. All the chapels of Chewton Mendip were in places named in the Domesday Survey, except for Paulton, and in 1086 they were all held by the Bishop of Coutances. However, in 1066 they were held by several thanes (*DB* 5,58; 59; 61; 65. 42,3. 46,25) with Queen

Edith holding Chewton Mendip (*DB* 1,29), while in 1086 it was held by the king, with the abbot of Jumièges holding Chewton Mendip church (*DB* 1,29).

It will now be clear that evidence about the status of churches and chapels in Somerset is frequently complex and therefore needs to be used with caution. It is particularly important to note that there is little pre-Conquest evidence of chapels linked to mother-churches (see Appendix 3).

3.1.2   *Disentangling the strands of evidence: complexities and contradictions*

The history of individual churches in Somerset is very varied, even when they apparently share similarities their historical trajectories can vary; the reasons for this are frequently oblique and difficult to recognise. The evidence therefore needs to be explored systematically on a compare and contrast basis in order to identify how far the trajectories of development vary between churches.

In order to understand how Somerset's early medieval Church evolved it is essential to acknowledge that the evidence is not straightforward, can be contradictory and at times is non-existent. Some churches stand out because their enduring status and wealth is immediately obvious. Frome church for example, is well evidenced in the Domesday Survey (*DB* 16,1) as is the surrounding manor which was valued at the considerable sum of £53 0s 5d in 1066/86 (*DB* 1,8). Frome church is recorded in the eleventh-century *Acta* of the Bath and Wells Diocese (Bath *Acta* No. 32) and was valued at the high value of £33 13s 4d in the *c.*1291 *Taxatio*. The Domesday Survey value of a place is not of course directly comparable to the *c.*1291 *Taxatio* value of its church, but these quite different valuations are useful in comparing the significance of several places over time.

Other churches with a similar trajectory to Frome, although with slightly less robust Domesday Survey evidence, are North Petherton (*DB* 1,3) and Bedminster (*DB* 1,7). North Petherton church is of particular interest as its *c.*1291 *Taxatio* value was £7, which is very different to the Domesday Survey value of its manor which was £42 8s 4d, although its value in the fourteenth century to the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England was 60 marks or £40

(*Ralph*, Vol. 1, 239-40). The trajectory of Bedminster church also varies from that of Frome in that it was valued in *c.*1291 at £52 0s 0d, which is over double the value of its manor in the Domesday Survey which was £21 0s 2½d. These are three of the churches which others have identified as being minsters (see Table 3.1) and yet, apparently, they had quite different histories.

It was only by detailed retrogressive analysis of the data that these different histories were teased apart. The first step in carrying out the retrogressive analysis was to consider the pattern of parishes that existed in the nineteenth century.

3.2   MAPPING THE EVIDENCE

Understanding how the Church was structured and organised spatially is key to understanding how it evolved, in particular the relationships between churches and their chapelries, but also the evolution of parish boundaries. Retrospectively mapping the evidence, from the known nineteenth-century parish structure to the manorial structure in 1066/86 provides insights into how the Church was structured over the centuries.

All the key sources of evidence discussed in this chapter were detailed in Chapter 2 (Sections 2.3-2.4). They will be considered systematically beginning with the nineteenth-century parish structure and ending with the evidence for pre-Conquest churches. This chapter is concerned with understanding the integral limitations and validity of each source of evidence. Using this systematic approach facilitates the evaluation of the processes which shaped how the Church evolved from the eleventh century. It also enables the identification of any differences in development across the county, and critically when those differences may have originated.

The evidence used varies from the nineteenth-century Tithe Maps to architectural evidence that a church existed in the immediate post-Conquest period. It is the interplay between this range of evidence which is crucial. The Domesday Survey may not provide evidence of a church in 1086, nor indeed of the place in which it is sited, but the physical fabric of the church may prove that it did exist in the immediate post-Conquest period. The evidence was mapped, but except for the nineteenth-century parishes the maps are an interpretation of

the written evidence. Overall there is remarkable stability in the structure of the Church, albeit frequently not in the relationships between churches and chapels.

3.2.1 *Parish structure in nineteenth-century Somerset*

The nineteenth-century parish structure is derived from Kain and Oliver's (1995) cartographic analysis of the Tithe Maps; see Appendices 1A and 1B. The map in Appendix 1A does not show the relationship between mother-churches and their chapelries as it is of no assistance in understanding the development of the early Church, but it does show the detached areas of parishes.

A good indicator of when parish churches were established are the variations in the size of parishes across the county (see Figure 3.1). It is clear that in parts of Somerset notably in the south and south-east there are concentrations of small irregular parishes but across western Somerset there is a pattern of large parishes. There are also large parishes elsewhere in the county, for example, around Wells and its cathedral, but there is no large parish around Bath, despite the importance of its abbey. Elsewhere in the county some large parishes such as Stogursey stand out because they are surrounded by a number of small parishes. Understanding how and why this very mixed pattern of parishes developed is crucial to understanding when these small parishes evolved.

The acreage of parishes where the churches have been identified by others (Aston 1986, 75-6; Hill 1989, 155-7; Costen 1992, 143-57; 2011, 175-224; Hase 1994, 47-81) as being, or probably being minsters vary greatly in size (see Appendix 2), from 1,089 acres (Ilchester) to 14,918 acres (Wells). The list of churches in Table 3.1 does not include all those with parishes over 5,000 acres which Hall (2000, 7) used as one of her criteria for identifying Dorset's minsters. For example, the parishes belonging to the following churches are all over 5,000 acres but are not listed in Table 3.1: Chard (5,449 acres), Somerton (6,925 acres), Stogursey (8,893 acres) and Yatton (5,374 acres). In developing a set of criteria to identify Somerset's minsters it is clearly important to use parish size as a criterion, but it is only one criterion. Indeed, Blair (2005, 450) makes the point that most 'ex-minsters kept unusually large parishes – the

rumps of still larger ones'. Using the nineteenth-century acreage of parishes is therefore important, but it is also important to use the information in the Domesday Survey and to consider the two sources together. The combined nineteenth-century acreage for Taunton's two small parishes was 2,755 acres, yet the Domesday Survey states that it had land for 100 ploughs (*DB* 2.1) which could have exceeded 10,000 acres. This is a good example of two small nineteenth-century parishes originally being included within a larger eleventh-century estate and therefore possibly within a large early *parochia*. Therefore, when making a judgement about the likely size of a *parochia* it is necessary to consider if originally it included more than one nineteenth century parish.

3.2.2   *Parish structure in sixteenth-century Somerset*

There is no map of the sixteenth-century parish structure, but Youngs (1980) has identified the parishes which existed by the sixteenth century which he terms 'ancient parishes'. Overall there is a remarkable degree of stability in parish names from the nineteenth century to the sixteenth century including for a number of exceedingly small parishes, for example, Ashbrittle (248 acres), Charlton Adam (90 acres), Goathill (300 acres), and Wheathill (315 acres). The map showing the relationship between mother-churches and their chapelries in the sixteenth century (Figure 3.3) is based on the written evidence provided by Youngs. Figure 3.3, as do Figures 3.4 and 3.5, illustrates the ad hoc nature of links between mother-churches and their chapelries which were not always adjacent, or even close to the mother parish.

Some chapels that can be identified in the sixteenth century had become independent parishes by the nineteenth century. This is particularly informative when that relationship can be identified for the first time in the Domesday Survey. For example, the chapel of Seaborough was within the manor of Crewkerne before 1066 (*DB* 3,1; Appendix 4), as it still was in the sixteenth century, yet by the nineteenth century Seaborough had become a separate parish. Appendix 4 shows the changes that had taken place between the nineteenth and sixteenth centuries with regard to chapelries.

Figure 3.3.   Map of sixteenth-century mother-churches and their chapelries

Mother-church parish identified from Youngs (1980)

Chapelry identified from Youngs (1980)

Link between mother-church and detached chapelry

NOTE 1
Chapels identified as existing within a mother-church parish are not shown.
NOTE 2
For mother-church / chapel relationships see Appendix 3.

Scales

miles

kilometres
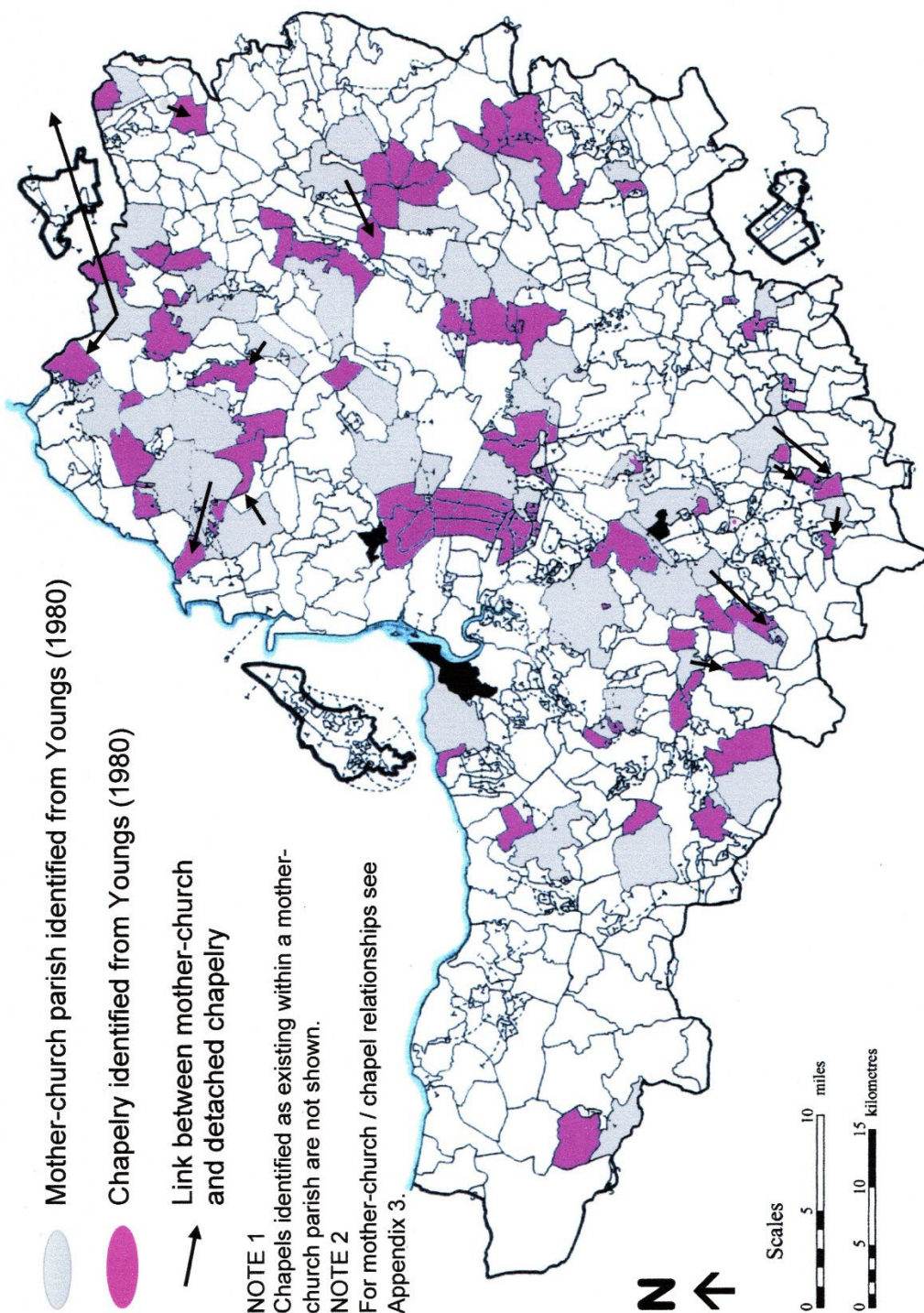
Map based on information collated from Youngs (1980). Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

Baltonsborough in the sixteenth century was for example, a chapelry of Butleigh, and North and South Brewham were chapelries of Bruton, but all three chapelries had become separate parishes by the nineteenth century. Each of these chapelries is not linked in the Domesday Survey with their later mother-church so it cannot be assumed that any link existed between them before the Conquest. As has already been demonstrated in the case of Chewton Mendip, the relationship between a mother-church and a chapel may only have existed after 1066. The names of some sixteenth-century chapelries were not recorded as places in the Domesday Survey but were nineteenth-century parishes: Bickenhall for example and Nailsea. Where a nineteenth-century, or indeed a sixteenth-century parish, does not have a relationship with a Domesday place it is clear that the area covered by the parish originally lay within a neighbouring one. These examples of places not in the Domesday Survey illustrate the on-going fluidity of parish boundaries.

In summary, the changes which took place in the organisation of the Church between the nineteenth and sixteenth centuries were relatively minor. The extent of the correlation between the churches and chapels that existed in the sixteenth and fourteenth centuries will now be considered.

3.2.3   *Church organisation in fourteenth-century Somerset*

Information about how the Church was organised in the fourteenth century has in the main been derived from the registers of Bishops' Gifford, Drokensford and Ralph. These have proved to be a rich source of evidence about which churches and chapelries existed, although the evidence only relates to those which had come to the notice of the bishop. It is important to note that some churches and chapels are only mentioned once across the three registers. In order to supplement the evidence provided by the registers the Somerset VCH was consulted, but unfortunately it does not yet cover the whole of Somerset and is therefore an incomplete source of evidence.

In writing the history of parishes the VCH draws on a wide range of historical evidence including national records, for example the *Rotuli Hundred orom* [Hundred Rolls] (Record Commission, 1818) and local records, for example the Chartulary of Muchelney Abbey. The first two volumes of the Somerset VCH

were written in 1906 and 1911 and the subsequent nine volumes were written between 1974 and 2015.

There is no map associated with the bishop's registers, so the indexes and prose descriptions have been used to construct a map showing the relationship between mother-churches and their chapelries in the fourteenth century (Figure 3.4). It is important to note that there is an overlap between Youngs (1980) identification of parishes and chapels and those evidenced in the bishops' registers because Youngs used the registers as one of his sources. There is a strong correlation, approximately 97%, between the churches in existence in the sixteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The registers being used for this research recorded the decisions of the bishops over several decades and would have been written in Latin by numerous clerks (see Section 2.3.7). There is therefore a lack of consistency in how information is recorded. This is particularly true with regard to whether a particular place of worship is called a church or a chapel, and it can be called both within the same register, for example these are six separate entries for Stoke Trister:

- Church (*Gifford*, 3).
- Chapel of Stoke Trister (*Drokensford*, 172).
- Rector of Stoke Tristre had a 'slender benefice' (*Drokensford*, 206).
- Chaplain instituted to cured chapel of Bayford [Boyford] (*Ralph*, Vol. 1, 474).
- Church and vicarage of Stoketristre and Boyford (*Ralph*, Vol. 1, 510).
- Priest instituted to parish church (*Ralph*, Vol. 1, 654).

The church therefore had a rector, who may not have been resident, a vicar and/or a priest, and yet the entries describe it as being a parish church, a chapel, and a mother-church. It is difficult to judge whether the chapel was within the parish church, or external to it, or whether the terms church and chapel were used interchangeably.

Figure 3.4.   Map of fourteenth-century mother-churches and their chapelries

Mother-church parish identified from the registers of Bishops Drokensford and Ralph

Chapelry

Link between mother-church and detached chapelry

NOTE 1
Chapels identified as existing within a mother-church parish are not shown.
NOTE 2
For mother-church / chapel relationships see Appendix 3.

Scales

miles

kilometres
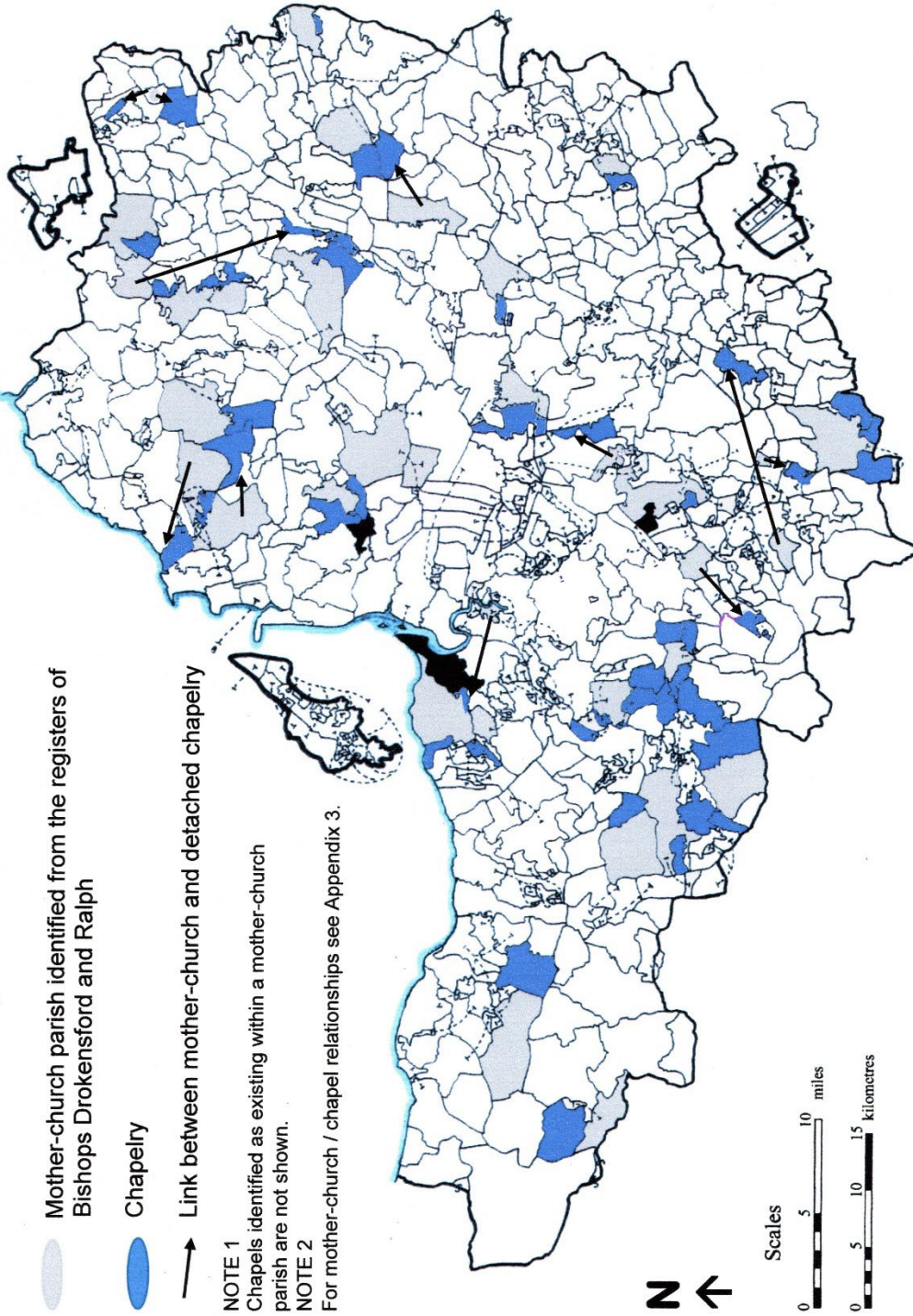
Map based on information collated from *Drokensford* and *Ralph*. Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

In the case of Pikewell it is possible that the entries in the registers are identifying an early medieval manorial church in decline, or a pre-Conquest free chapel with a rector, or a demoted medieval church, or a church that was not functioning:

- Rector of Pikewell [Pykewell] chapel saving the rights of the mother-church Frome (*Drokensford*, 111).
- Rectorial but extinct before Valor Henry VIII (Hobhouse 1887 [*Drokensford*], editor's comment, 111).
- Priest to the cured chapel (*Ralph*, Vol. 2, 474)
- Chaplain to the parish church of Pikewell (*Ralph*, Vol. 2, 722).

Pikewell was not listed by Youngs (1980) and is now a deserted settlement (Som. HER No. 25716) in the modern parish of Selwood, unfortunately there are no visible earthworks. Pikewell was not a Domesday place and was presumably within the manor of Frome in 1066/86 because Youngs (1980, 436) states that Selwood was previously a chapel of Frome. When the church and rectory came into being, and whether it was ever independent of Frome church, cannot currently be discerned. In order to overcome these difficulties, the decision was made to class as a church all places of worship that had a vicar or rector associated with them.

In reading the bishops' registers it is possible to discern overall decisions that the bishop was implementing. A striking example of this is Bishop Ralph's determination to establish parish boundaries in relation to church attendance, and of course the payment of tithes and church taxes.

Bishop Ralph to perpetual vicar of Taunton:

We order you that before you celebrate mass in your church you investigate if there be a parishioner of another place who presumes to hear mass there. And if you find any such you shall cast them out and compel them to recede from your said church (*Ralph*, Vol. 2, 673).

Bishop Ralph to the rector of Monkton:

We order you that you inhibit any persons, under pain of greater excommunication, that they do not intrude on the tithes or oblations pertaining to the church of Crich [Creech St Michael] or dispose of the same. Moreover, inhibit, under the same pain, any chaplains that they do not presume to administer any sacraments or sacramentals to the parishioners of the said church (*Ralph*, Vol. 2, 771).

In making decisions about chapels and oratories the registers sometimes state that the decision is being made without prejudice to the mother-church [*matris ecclesio*], for example Pikewell, which has already been discussed, or for example with regard to a chapel or oratory at West Bower manor near Bridgwater:

> '*capella siue oratorio suo apud Coker juxta Brugg* [Bridgwater] *dicte sue diocesis absque prejudicio matris ecclesio divina facere celebrari*'; licence granted to Willelmo Coker to hear divine service (*Ralph* Vol. 1, 182).

Within the registers there are references to the *parochia* of a known chapel, for example the '*parochia of Bikenalre*' [Bicknoller], which is odd when in the same entry there is also a reference to the '*parochia*' of its fourteenth-century mother-church of Stogumber (*Ralph*, Vol. 1, 172). This underlines the difficulty of how a particular place of worship should be designated and explains why some churches, Bicknoller for example, appear as both churches and chapels in Appendices 2, 3 and 4. In the case of Bicknoller there was an endowment for a chaplain so the living was technically a perpetual curacy which was a salaried post funded by the patron of the parish (Somerset VCH Vol. 5, 1985, 13-19, fns 132 and 133: Somerset Record Office D/D/B returns 1827). It is therefore possible that because the rector/vicar of Stogumber did not have to pay the chaplain at Bicknoller it was regarded as a church.

There are several changes between the chapels in existence in the sixteenth century compared to the fourteenth century (Figures 3.2 and 3.3; Appendix 4). In comparing the two maps it is immediately obvious that more mother-churches and their chapelries are shown for the sixteenth century. Some chapels that existed in the sixteenth century were apparently not chapels in the fourteenth century. In some cases, however, fourteenth-century chapels had become independent parishes by the sixteenth century, for example Luxborough, Bathealton and Chapel Allerton. There are also chapels that have not been identified in the fourteenth-century bishops' registers which were chapels in the sixteenth, thirteenth or twelfth centuries (Figures 3.2 and 3.4): Chillington for example, and Farrington Gurney. It is therefore clear that Figure 3.4 showing the fourteenth-century chapelries does not show all the chapels in existence due to the arbitrary nature of the bishops' registers. In looking at the maps showing the chapelries in the sixteenth and fourteenth centuries it is notable

that there are relatively few mother-churches which have more than one or two chapelries that later became nineteenth-century parishes. There are quite a few that only have one chapelry, for example Wellington, but also Butleigh, Hawkridge, Stogursey, Wiveliscombe and Yeovil. Most of the chapels belonging to these churches equate to Domesday places. The exceptions are Wiveliscombe's chapel of Fitzhead and [Kingston] Pitney which was a chapel of Yeovil. It is important to note that Hawkridge, which was not a Domesday place, was the mother-church of Withypoole which is included in the Domesday Survey (*DB* 46.3).

Most of the churches in existence in the sixteenth century had been in existence in the fourteenth century. There were, however, changes in the pattern of mother-churches and chapelries. It is only by comparing the later patterns with the chapels in existence in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that it is possible to reach a view as to which chapels probably existed in the immediate post-Conquest period. It is therefore important to look at the overall pattern of relationships, as is illustrated by the gaps in evidence for the chapelries of Chillington and Farrigdon Guerney.

3.2.4   *Church organisation in late-thirteenth-century Somerset*

There is no comprehensive list of Somerset churches or chapels existing in the thirteenth century, despite the list compiled for the *c.*1291 *Taxatio*, because any church that was not wealthy enough to pay tax was not listed (Appendices 2 and 5). There is no map associated with the *Taxatio,* so the entries have been used to construct a map showing twelfth and thirteenth-century mother-churches and their chapels (Figure 3.5). It appears that the list of chapels is incomplete which is probably due to the way in which the *Taxatio* list was compiled. There is a drop in the number of known churches from the thirteenth century compared to those from the fourteenth century, however overall, there is a strong correlation between the two.

Figure 3.5. Map of twelfth and thirteenth century mother-churches and their chapelries
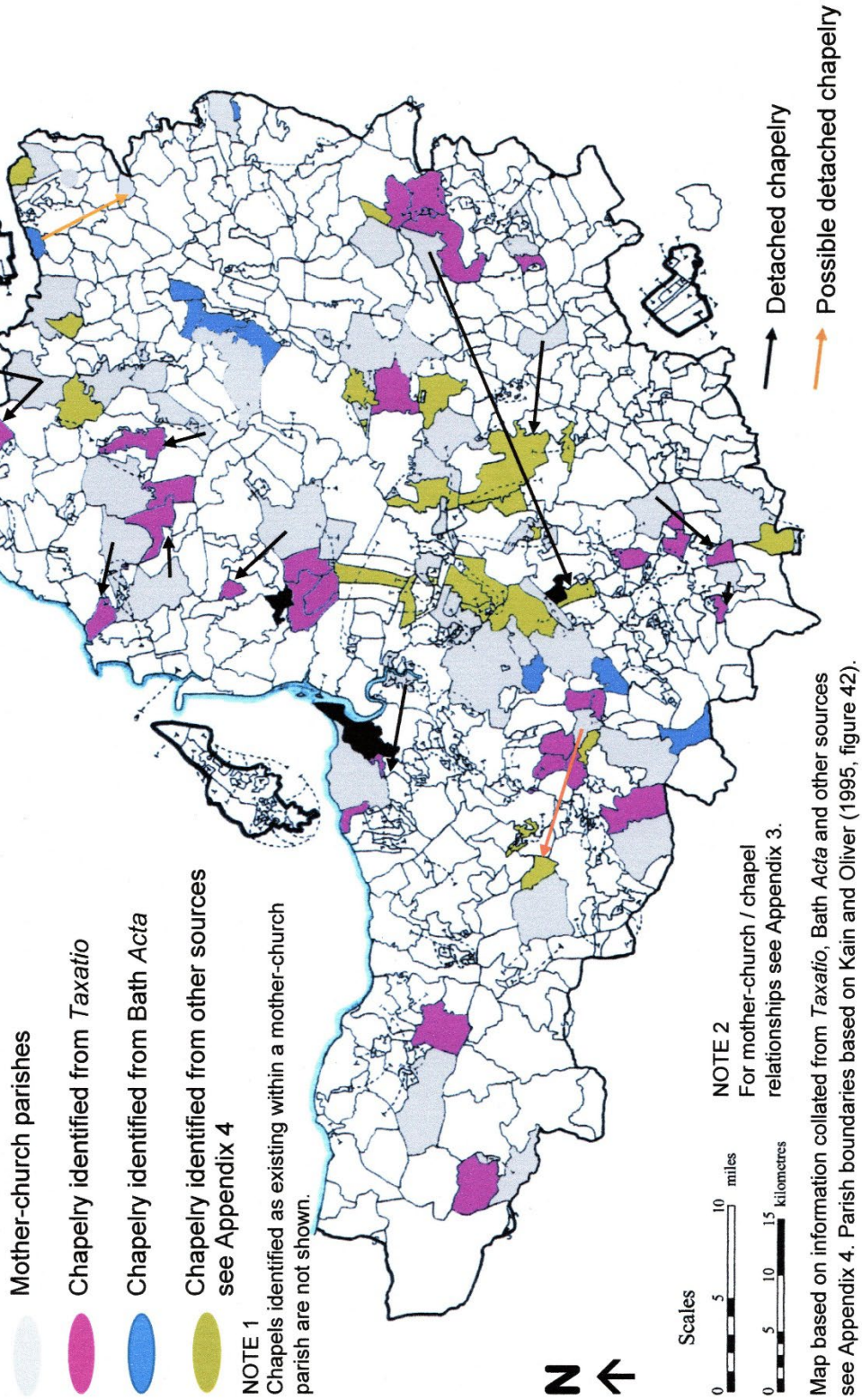
If the numbers of churches in existence in the sixteenth, fourteenth and thirteenth centuries are compared it is clear that they closely correlate to one another. There were:

- *c.*425 churches in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries;
- *c.*398 churches in the sixteenth century;
- *c.*388 churches in the fourteenth century; and
- *c.*306 churches in the late thirteenth century.

Therefore, the percentage of fourteenth-century churches named in the bishops' registers and in the thirteenth-century *Taxatio* was nearly 79%, and of those named by Youngs (1980) as ancient parishes in the sixteenth century, nearly 77% were also named in the thirteenth century.

3.2.5 *Prebends and appropriated churches*

There is good evidence from elsewhere that prebends, which equated to the stripping of assets, including income, and transferring it to a cathedral or monastery, were instituted in churches that had been early medieval minsters (Blair 2005, 364-7). Therefore, prebends need to be included in the criteria used to determine which churches in Somerset should be identified as important in the early medieval period (Appendix 5). It should be noted that some churches do not have a *Taxatio* value, for example Chard, Wellington and Wiveliscombe, because they were included within a prebend and the value of each church was not stated. The values of churches varied greatly and therefore it is not possible to make any assumptions about how the overall value for a prebend was divided between the churches that it included. In north-eastern Somerset (above a line from Pawlett to Kilmington) there are twelve churches worth more than £30 while in the rest of the county there are eight. None of these are in west Somerset, but of course this excludes the prebendal churches, particularly Combe St Nicholas in south Somerset which had a number of prebends associated with it (Figure 3.6; Appendix 5).

Assessment for tax:

£ 40. 0s. 0d.

Benefice Details:

Benefice of provostship of Wells Cathedral held by Bishop of Bath and Wells
(prebendal church) COMBE ST NICHOLAS
dedication: ST NICHOLAS + VICARAGE[1]
(prebendal chapel) WASTON[2]
dedication: UNKNOWN
(prebendal church) CHARD
Dedication: ST MARY + VICARAGE
(prebendal church) WELLINGTON[3]
dedication: ST JOHN THE BAPTIST
(prebendal chapel) WEST BUCKLAND
dedication: ST MARY
(prebendal church) WINSHAM
dedication ST STEPHEN + VICARAGE

[1] The compilers of the *Taxatio* online database have included vicarages recorded in the Bishops Registers.

[2] Identified as Chapel Cottage at the site of the deserted medieval village named as Weston on the OS map.

[3] Wellington vicarage is listed separately with its own value in the *Taxatio*.

Figure 3.6.   *Prebendal churches of Chard, Combe St Nicholas, Wellington and Winsham: detail taken from Taxatio online database. This illustrates how several churches were included in the value of a prebend and therefore did not have a separate value.*

The *Taxatio* also includes information about which churches were appropriated and to whom (Appendix 5). Appropriation is similar to a prebend in that the income of the rectory (this is the landholding and not just the house) belonging to the church was appropriated to a specific ecclesiastical entity, for example Wells cathedral. Charlton Adam church for example, was appropriated by Bruton Priory which then funded a house and landholding, or vicarage, to enable a vicar to be appointed to the parish. Entries in the *Acta* and bishops' registers provide a clear insight into this process:

Notification of Baldwin de Colombières' grant of the advowson of Lamyatt church to church of Godstow and appointment of chaplain, subject to a yearly pension of 1/2 mark payable to church of Godstow. No. 136 confirms grant and adds that pension of 1/2 mark may be increased after the death of the donor on the foundation of a perpetual vicarage (Bath *Acta* Nos 135 and 136, 1174 x 1186 [No. 135] or *c.*1189 [No. 136]).

'Ordinacio vicarie de Bergh [Berrow]', Bishop during his recent visitation had found that the vicarage of Berrow church which was annexed to the archdeacon of Wells 'was so poor that the vicar could not be suitably

sustained'. The Bishop reviewed the ordinance for the vicarage made by Bishop Drokensford in 1327 and then amended it so that the vicar no longer had to pay the archdeacon 40s. as a pension to sustain 3 chaplains and he augmented it (*Ralph*, Vol. 2, 450-1).

There are very few churches which were held as a prebend and were also appropriated, but exceptions include Carhampton and Old Cleeve (Appendix 5).

Churches had always been given, bequeathed, farmed [leased], and sold and this could impact on the extent to which a bishop could exercise his authority. There is a very telling exchange of documents in the fourteenth century between Bishop Ralph and the Court of Canterbury which demonstrates how churches were regarded as sources of income as it lists the values of churches and the pensions payable from them (*Ralph*, Vol. 1, 21-2). A letter from the Court of Canterbury to Bishop Ralph provides an example of how the bishop attempted to regain control over North Petherton and other churches:

> The prior and brethren of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England having intimated to us that the Bishop claims obedience from them by reason of the churches of Northpederton [North Petherton], Durston, Halse, Bromfield [Broomfield], and Kynemersdon [Kilmersdon], in the diocese of Bath and Wells, and that the party of the said religious men appearing before the said official as special commissary of the Bishop, asked him for a copy of the commission and certificate of citation which were refused and the said religious men were pronounced in contempt for which they were mulcted in an immoderate sum of money to be levied from the preceptory, brethren and sisters of Boclaunde, [Minchin Buckland Priory, near Durston] (*Ralph*, Vol. 2, 21-2).

The reason the bishop was so anxious to regain control of North Petherton church was because its value to the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England in the fourteenth century was 60 marks or £40 (*Ralph*, Vol. 1, 239-40).

Some churches stand out because they had a *Taxatio* value in excess of £20 and had parishes of 3,000 plus acres; they therefore meet two of the criteria used by Hall (2000, 7) as determinates for minster status. Three parishes to which this applies are Huntspill (value £31 6s 8d), Milverton (value £38 13s 4d) and Stogursey (value of £30), whether they were early medieval minsters or not will be considered in Chapter 8.

In 1066/86 Glastonbury Abbey held an extensive estate to the east of the river Parrett, which included the manor of Shapwick and five subsidiary *vills*:

Catcott, Chilton [Polden], Edington, Sutton [Mallet] and Woolavington (*DB* 8,5; see Figure 3.7). However, in 1066/86 there is no evidence that the abbey held the landholding which became the small nineteenth-century parish of Moorlinch (1,122 acres) but given its spatial relationship to Glastonbury Abbey's land holdings in 1066/86 it seems probable that Moorlinch was also held by the abbey when the Domesday Survey was completed (Figure 3.7). Indeed, it is formally recorded that by the end of the twelfth century the abbey held Moorlinch (Bath *Acta* Nos 114 and 216). Despite Moorlinch not being mentioned in the Domesday Survey by the sixteenth century its church had the high *Taxatio* value of £25 13s 4d and four chapelries, which in 1086 had been included within the manor of Shapwick (Figure 3.7). The *Taxatio* value of Shapwick church was £21 0s 0d, less than for Moorlinch church, and it only had the chapel of Ashcott in the sixteenth century (Youngs 1980). The relationship between Shapwick and Moorlinch is a good example of how the pre-eminence of churches within a local area could change over time.

The chapels that can be identified from the *Taxatio* are shown in Figure 3.5. When the pattern of chapelries on this map is compared to those for the sixteenth and fourteenth centuries (Figures 3.3 and 3.4), it can be seen that some chapels are of long standing, for example, Churchill (chapel to Banwell), Burrington (chapel to Wrington), West Buckland (chapel to Wellington) and Withypoole (chapel to Hawkridge). There are chapels that have been identified as existing in the sixteenth and thirteenth centuries, but not in the fourteenth, for example, West Pennard a chapelry of East Pennard, or Mark and Blackford chapelries of Wedmore (see Appendix 3). The *Taxatio* provides evidence for some chapels that have not been previously identified in the fourteenth or sixteenth centuries (see Appendix 4), for example, Barrington (chapel to South Petherton), Biddisham (chapel to Wedmore) and Nempnett Thrubwell (chapel to Compton Martin). Overall, there are fewer chapels identified by the *Taxatio* in the late thirteenth century than for the fourteenth or sixteenth centuries, and there are fewer mother-churches with more than one or two chapels.

A 1066/86 holdings of Glastonbury Abbey

Shapwick

Moorlinch

Glastonbury

Westonzoyland / Middlezoy

Westonzoyland

B Later chapelries within Shapwick estate 1066/86

C Chapelries held by Moorlinch and Westonzoyand churches in the sixteenth century

Held by Glastonbury in 1066/86 (*DB* 8.1) = later nineteenth-century parish of Glastonbury

Held by Glastonbury Abbey in 1066/86 (*DB* 8.5 - 7, 10 - 16, 18)

Later parish of Moorlinch (Stacy 2001, 71); Maps A and C

Later parishes of Othery and Westonzoyland which are not mentioned in the Domesday Survey but in *vill* of Middlezoy [or '*Sowy*' which included Middlezoy, Westonzoyland and Othery] (Stacy 2001, 135).

Included in the Shapwick estate in 1066/86 (*DB* 8.5)

Chapelries of Moorlinch by sixteenth century (Youngs 1980)

Chapelries of Westonzoyland by sixteenth century (Youngs 1980)

|---| Detached sections of nineteenth-century parishes

NOTE. Much of the '*Sowy*' estate comprised low-lying wetlands which are discussed in Chapter 6 (see figure 6.12).

Map based on information collated from Domesday Survey, Youngs (1980) and Stacy (2001). Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

Figures 3.7A, B, C.   *Illustrative diagrams of 1066/86 holdings of Glastonbury Abbey and later chapelries of Moorlinch and Westonzoyland.*

3.2.6   *Church organisation in twelfth and eleventh-century Somerset*

A much wider range of sources was used to look at the organisation of the Church in the twelfth and eleventh centuries, from the Bath *Acta* (1061-1205) to the eleventh-century Domesday Survey to site specific architectural and archaeological evidence. How this evidence was collated is discussed in Chapter 2 (Sections 2.3.9-2.3.10). The evidence provided by the Bath *Acta*, which is included in the 'other evidence' column in Appendix 4 with the detail included in Appendix 3, will be considered first. Cannington church (*DB* 16,3) which is known from the Domesday Survey has not, for example, been identified from the *Acta*, and similarly neither has Congresbury church (*DB* 1,21). Some of the entries in the Domesday Survey which relate to churches show very clearly that they were regarded as property to be utilised in the same way as the post-Conquest prebendal or appropriated churches:

> Cannington: Erchenger the priest holds from the king 2 ½ virgates of land in [the lands of] Cannington church. … Value 30s; when he acquired it, as much. (*DB* 16, 3; the rest of the manor was held by the king).

> Congresbury: Bishop Maurice holds this manor's church with ½ hide. Value 20s. (*DB* 1,21; the rest of the manor was held by the king).

There is a remarkable degree of stability in parish and place names from the nineteenth century through to the Domesday Survey, which can be seen very clearly in Appendix 2, including for several small parishes; Ashbrittle (248 acres), Charlton Adam (90 acres) and Wheathill (315 acres). It is therefore possible to conclude that a number of small parishes originated as small eleventh-century or earlier manorial estates.

The Bath *Acta*, despite not identifying churches that are known from before and after the twelfth century such as Cannington, do identify chapels that are not known at a later date, for example Durston (chapel to North Petherton) and Otterford (chapel to Pitminster). It can be seen that the mother-churches and chapelries identified through the *Acta*, and indeed from the Somerset VCH, in the main do not correspond to those identified by the *Taxatio* (Figure 3.5; Appendix 3). There is, though, the exception of Abbots Leigh as a chapelry of Bedminster which was identified through both the *Taxatio* and the *Acta*. The mother-churches and their chapels identified by the *Acta* have been included in

Figure 3.5, together with those from the *Taxatio*, and those identified from other sources (Appendix 4). It is immediately clear that the chapels of Chewton Mendip in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries mirror the pattern of Chewton Mendip's sixteenth-century chapels (Appendix 3).

The extent to which the nineteenth-century parishes reflect the distribution of churches in the twelfth century can be seen by looking at the distribution map of physical evidence for those existing by the twelfth century (Figure 3.5). There are places which are not mentioned in the Domesday Survey whose churches might be identified as disrupting the pre-Conquest pattern of churches, for example Charlton Horethorne church which by *c.*1291 was worth £23 6s 8d, or Midsomer Norton church which was worth £22, or Moorlinch church which was worth £25 13s 4d. It cannot, however, be assumed that these churches did not exist pre-Conquest because there is physical evidence that Charlton Horethorne church existed in the twelfth century (Som. HER No. 53655) and Moorlinch has a Norman font and was in existence by 1175-6 (Orbach and Pevsner 2014, 471; Som. HER No. 10585). It is of note that the *c.*1291 value of Moorlinch church was virtually identical to that for Milborne Port church, which was £23 6s 8d, and that the latter was identified as a minster, or probable minster. It is therefore possible that a settlement might have a Norman church despite not being named in the Domesday Survey.

Some churches which had small nineteenth-century parishes are Brympton [D'Everey] and Charlton Adam which are recorded within the Bath *Acta*. As already stated, surviving evidence of Norman or earlier stonework is by its nature arbitrary but is more likely to be found in small parish churches, rather than larger, which are more likely to have been rebuilt since the twelfth century. In Somerset, with its proliferation of small parishes, any twelfth-century or earlier stonework provides excellent supporting evidence that many of the small nineteenth-century parishes have their origins before the thirteenth century.

Elm parish with an acreage of 893 for example, and Sutton Bingham with 549 acres, both have churches which include Norman masonry within their fabric (Appendix 7). Therefore the boundaries of these parishes in the twelfth century must have been little different to those pertaining in the nineteenth

century. The survival of physical evidence is crucial in proving the existence of these two churches prior to the twelfth century because the historical record does not show the existence of Elm church until the fourteenth century, or of Sutton Bingham church until the thirteenth century (Appendix 2). The Domesday Survey records both Elm and Sutton Bingham, but there are several small nineteenth-century parishes whose names are not recorded in the survey, and yet their churches or chapels contain Norman fabric, for example Corfe (1,127 acres), Thurloxton (551 acres) and Orchard Portman (635 acres). There is therefore good evidence that the parish structure existing in Somerset in the eleventh century, as shown in Figure 3.8, continued more or less into the nineteenth century and should be regarded as a stable entity.

3.2.7 *Pre-Conquest pattern of churches and chapels*

The processes by which the Church in Somerset evolved after the Conquest were clearly complex and variable and were undoubtedly no less so before the Conquest. The evidence that can be used to explore the ways in which the Church developed and changed before 1066 is quite different as we have no documents to provide evidence of the bishops' decisions and no valuations of churches. The only significant sources of written pre-Conquest evidence, other than King Alfred's will, by which he bequeathed various royal estates, are charters but these are few and there are minimal references to churches within them. They do provide evidence of land grants but, as discussed previously (Section 2.3), they are not always a reliable source of information. The charter supposedly issued by King Ine in 725 AD (charter S250) with its reference to the church at Street for example, has been described by Abrams (1991, 125-6) as 'blatantly spurious', and probably dates from the early twelfth century.

The Domesday Survey provides information about churches, church land and priests (see Appendix 6); the difficulties in interpreting the information about priests were discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.10). The implications of this evidence will be explored in Chapter 4.

Figure 3.8.   Map of historical, architectural, and archaeological evidence indicating existence of church buildings *c.*1066/86

NOTE All early medieval – prior to 1066 unless noted as early Norman – from 1066 to *c.*1200

Definite architectural fragment / font

Possible architectural fragment / font

DB evidence

Definite architectural or archaeological feature

Early medieval / early Norman feature

Possible early medieval / early Norman feature

Scales

miles

kilometres

Map based on information collated from Appendix 7. The parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

The Domesday Survey provides clear insights into how the Church might have been structured before 1066 by identifying which places were within particular manors. The survey states that Walton, for example, was a manor which included Ashcott, Pedwell and Compton Dundon and that it paid tax for 30 hides with a value of £15 (*DB* 8,11). This contrasts quite sharply with the entry for Overleigh, later part of Street, which only paid tax for 4 hides and was valued at £8 (*DB* 8,16). However, Street is recorded as a church in *c.*1291 and is listed as having Walton as its chapel (Appendix 3), but both are recorded as having rectors in the early fourteenth century (*Drokensford* 160, 229). Glastonbury Abbey held both Walton and Street and therefore it was within the power of the abbey to change the relationship between the two churches. Given that so many of Somerset's churches were held by various religious organisations in 1066, and even more so in 1086, it is obvious that decisions by these bodies had the potential to alter the relationships between churches and chapels.

3.3   CONCLUSION

The analysis presented in this chapter suggests that the nineteenth-century pattern of churches, and therefore parishes, was similar to that existing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Therefore, the pattern of nineteenth-century parishes, which markedly varies across the county, reflects the probable pre-1086 pattern of parish relationships. For example, the percentage of nineteenth-century parishes which were named in the late thirteenth century was about 72%. This figure would undoubtably be higher if it was known how many churches in *c.*1291 were too poor to be taxed. Given that some places not mentioned in the Domesday Survey, for example Charlton Horethorne, had twelfth-century churches it can no longer be assumed that these places did not have a pre-Conquest church. Figure 3.8 brings together all the evidence that was considered and provides a good indication of how the Church in Somerset was organised in *c.*1066/86.

In bringing together these very disparate strands of evidence which stretch from the nineteenth-century parish structure to the Domesday Survey and beyond, it was important to continually assess the relationships between the

various sources of evidence. The changing affiliations between churches, and indeed between churches and chapels, need to be considered as part of a pattern or a process through which the importance of a particular church or chapel could change. In identifying the criteria which can be used to classify Somerset's early medieval minsters it was essential to acknowledge when and how they gained that significant status and also, whether they lost it. It is therefore impossible to identify the pre-Conquest churches in Somerset without identifying the processes which established, changed and shaped the organisation of the Church between the late post-Roman and the early medieval periods.

Chapter 4

IDENTIFYING SOMERSET'S PRE-EMINENT EARLY MEDIEVAL CHURCHES

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This thesis has in the earlier chapters relied on retrospectively analysing a range of evidence, from the nineteenth-century parish structure to architectural and archaeological evidence. However, no consideration was given to identifying which churches were more important than their neighbouring churches and therefore had more significance within the Church hierarchy. The aim of this chapter is to build on the evidence drawn from the tenth to thirteenth centuries and use it to identify which churches were pre-eminent during the early medieval period. By establishing a list of Somerset's pre-eminent foundations this chapter will facilitate the identification of Somerset's early medieval minster churches.

There has been much debate about how the Church was organised across England (see Section 1.2) and when and by whom minsters were founded. Henry Loyn considered the function of minsters and stated that by

> 800 it has been estimated that there were few settlements in lowland England that were more than five or six miles from a minster. The term 'minster' itself covered a variety of establishments, but normally involved a group of clergy, some priests, many deacons, responsible for the routine everyday religious life of the community: baptism, marriage, provision of regular services, especially the mass, and burial of the dead… [and] in theory at least they supplied their communities with an effective pastoral structure (Loyn 2000, 29).

This view was echoed by John Blair who stated that any debate about the establishment of minsters cannot be conclusive because:

> The English monastic landscape, as it had formed by *c*.750, was diverse and complex. There were huge variations in size, wealth, and character, and many channels by which communities obtained rulership, learning, cultural guidance, and economic support (Blair 2005, 83).

Sarah Foot is clear that some 'minsters were established specifically to meet the wider pastoral needs' of an area, but the context within which others were

established was quite different, for example by an individual to express 'a personal religious vocation' (Foot 2006, 81-7). There is meagre surviving evidence of when and by whom many minsters were founded (Foot 2006, 91) and a similar lack of evidence as to how pastoral care was provided by the minsters (see Section 1.2.3). There are clear indications that there was no such thing as a standard minster as different types of ecclesiastical establishments could provide pastoral care. Sarah Foot had previously made the very pertinent point that

> neither the quality nor nature of a minster's religious observance was indicated in the language by which it was described in contemporary sources, and modern historians should not attempt to enforce such subjective values by their own use of language (Foot 1992, 225).

Consequently, it is not possible to make assumptions about pre-Conquest churches based on the limited contemporary or later historical evidence that is available for an individual foundation, nor indeed on decisions applicable to all churches made by Church councils or synods, and certainly not on how pastoral care was provided.

The question which this chapter primarily addresses is therefore the only one that can be attempted: how can Somerset's pre-eminent churches, and therefore its early medieval minsters, be identified? The most recent list of Somerset's early medieval minsters and of churches in existence in 1066 was compiled by Michael Costen (2011, 223-4, see Section 1.3.1). Unfortunately, he only used historical and architectural evidence in a generalised way and does not attempt to assess how churches are sited within the landscape.

It is essential that each church is considered individually because it is not possible to make blanket assumptions. Therefore what evidence can be used and how can it be used to identify the churches which were pre-eminent in the early medieval period, particularly those which had lost importance by 1066? Theresa Hall (2000) researching the early minsters of Dorset adopted a structured assessment process which included weighting the evidence to ensure that it was used as impartially as possible. This thesis uses a similar approach to identify Somerset's pre-eminent churches, and therefore its minsters. All the key places mentioned in this chapter have been mapped; see Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1.   Key places mentioned in Chapter 4

1. Banwell
2. Bath
3. Bedminster
4. Brent
5. Bruton
6. Cannington
7. Carhampton
8. Chard
9. Cheddar
10. Chew Magna
11. Chewton Mendip
12. Combe St Nicholas
13. Congresbury

14. Crewkerne
15. Curry Rivel
16. Ditcheat
17. Doulting
18. East Pennard
19. Frome
20. Glastonbury
21. Ilminster
22. Keynsham
23. Kilmersdon
24. Kingsbury Episcopi
25. Martock

26. Milborne Port
27. Milverton
28. North Curry
29. North Petherton
30. Old Cleeve
31. Pilton
32. Shapwick
33. South Petherton
34. Stogursey
35. Taunton
36. Wedmore

37. Wells
38. Yatton

Scales

N

Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

4.1.1   *Identifying pre-eminent early medieval churches*

The integration of historical, architectural and archaeological evidence to determine the importance of churches was key to the approach Hall adopted (2000) to identify the early medieval minsters of Dorset. By using the same approach, including weighting the evidence, it was possible to ensure that churches across Somerset could be compared on an equal basis. The county's pre-eminent churches could then be identified and these are listed in Appendix 8. The approach developed to achieve this is discussed below.

Some of the criteria Hall (2000, 7) used are not applicable in Somerset, for example there is insufficient evidence of churches having dependent chapels (see Sections 3.1.1 and 3.2.2-3.2.6). Other criteria are not applicable because the available information for churches in Somerset is so limited, for example pre-twelfth-century evidence of a cruciform layout and pre-Conquest royal burials.

The criteria chosen by Hall (2000, 7) which have been used in Appendix 8 are:

- churches that were in royal or ecclesiastical ownership in 1066;
- the acreage of parishes in the nineteenth century (all acreages are derived from Kain and Oliver 1995); Hall used two categories: 3-5,000 acres and 5,000 acres or more;
- Hall also used Domesday Survey places which were taxed on a minimum of 50 hides. This is appropriate when the nineteenth-century acreage of a parish clearly does not equate to the hidage listed in the survey, for example in relation to Taunton; and
- that churches were taxed in *c.*1291; Hall used taxable values of £10-£20 and £20 or more, however, the taxable value criteria in Appendix 8, were based on values from £13-£19 and £20 or more.

The reason for this deviation from Hall's (2000, 5 table 1) criteria is based on her analysis of the value of churches in five South-West counties including Somerset. This shows that 26% of Somerset churches had a value of £10-14 compared to only 13% of Dorset churches. In total 34% of Dorset churches had a value over £10 compared to 50.5% in Somerset, therefore the decision was

made to set the minimum taxable value for the criterion at £13, rather than the £10 used by Hall to reflect the differentials in the overall value of churches.

The evidence adopted to assess the importance of Somerset's churches is considered below. The chapter concludes by setting out how Appendix 8 was constructed.

4.2   EVIDENCE USED TO ASSESS THE IMPORTANCE OF SOMERSET'S CHURCHES

This section begins with a discussion of the architectural and archaeological evidence which can be utilised to assess when a church might have been in existence. However, most of the evidence is derived from the Domesday Survey and this is discussed at length and links into a discussion on the financial status of churches. Consideration is then given as to whether it is appropriate to use the relationships between mother-churches and their chapelries, which Hall (2000) used as one of her criteria, in identifying Somerset's minsters.

4.2.1   *Architectural and archaeological evidence*

The Domesday Survey may list very few churches in Somerset but using the physical evidence provided by architecture and archaeology the indications are that many more were in existence at the end of the eleventh century than included in the survey (see Figure 3.8). A key issue which cannot be ignored is the difficulty of dating architectural features and this was discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4.1), hence only rather imprecise descriptions are used below to date stonework. Elm church for example has herringbone masonry (described as typical of 'Saxo-Norman' work) in the nave and a blocked Norman north doorway into the chancel (Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 519-20). The evidence for an early stone church at Blagdon is a possible pre-Conquest piscine basin which has 'four big-headed figures under arches' (Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 221-2). The pre-Conquest church at Shepton Mallet is evidenced by 'Saxon long and short [stone]work' on the outside of the south wall of the nave; the join can be seen between the earlier stonework and the Norman chancel (Som. HER No. 24949; Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 597-9). A similar join between

'Saxon' and Norman stonework can be seen in Figure 4.2 of Wilton church on the outskirts of Taunton. Shepton Mallet church, and indeed Wilton church, provide good evidence for the existence of pre-Conquest stone churches.

Figure 4.2.   *St George's church, Wilton, showing extant 'Saxon long-and-short' stonework in the west wall, the tower is to the right (author's photo).*

Pilton church, as already noted, is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey, but it is proposed that a stone church was originally built here in the eleventh century (Historic England Listed Building No. 1058818). The building has a Norman style south doorway which was constructed in 1871 based on the original but damaged Norman doorway (Orbach and Pevsner 2014, 519). Pilton church dated by Historic England (Listed Building No. 1058818) as being built between the eleventh to the fifteenth century and then restored *c.*1870 illustrates the difficulty of being precise about the origins of architectural details.

In summary, there are two primary sources of evidence for the existence of churches in the eleventh century: written evidence provided by the Domesday Survey, and physical evidence provided by architecture and archaeology. Appendix 8 therefore uses the physical evidence for the eleventh and twelfth centuries to balance the lack of written evidence in the Domesday Survey.

4.2.2   *Assessing the evidence - Domesday Survey*

The first source of evidence used to assess the importance of churches is the Domesday Survey (all references are from Thorn and Thorn 1980; in addition, Exon evidence is quoted based on Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967). The significance, but also the limited nature of this evidence, is considered below in relation to the importance of individual churches.

The information provided by the Domesday Survey about churches in Somerset is so sparse that it is clearly not comprehensive (see Section 2.3.10). For example, we know there was a church at Taunton because there is a list of places paying taxes to it, yet the church itself is not mentioned (*DB* 2,1-3). The survey provides a range of evidence about churches, priests and church landholdings, but there is no standard approach to how this information is presented. Two examples are given below, in the first there is no evidence of a church and in the second there is no evidence of a priest:

A priest of this manor [Bedminster] holds land for 1 plough (*DB* 1,7).

Richere of Les Andelys holds Stogumber church from the king. Before 1066 it paid tax for 2 hides. Land for 4 ploughs (*DB* 16,2).

Consequently, the information provided by the survey about these two churches is not directly comparable. Can it be assumed that there was a church at Bedminster, or a priest at Stogumber? David Roffe (2007, 229, fn.87) commenting on the Domesday Survey of Shropshire states that although there were priests at Broughton, Astley and Yorton none of these estates, held by St Mary and St Chad church in Shrewsbury, subsequently had a church. It is therefore 'likely that the priests were canons who held the endowments' (Roffe 2007, 229, fn.87; see also Barrow 2005). This example underlines the difficulties, discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.10), which are inherent in interpreting the survey evidence for priests and churches.

Therefore, in using the survey as a source of evidence for the existence of churches it is necessary to consolidate all the references to churches, priests and church land into one criterion. This will be used in assessing the pre-eminence of churches in 1066/86.

4.2.3 *Landholders in 1066*

The Domesday Survey provides information relating to landholders during the reign of Edward the Confessor, but also for 1086 when the survey was carried out. Comparison between these two sets of data often reveals how places had been downgraded by no longer being held by the royal family or by having land or customary dues taken away and given to another manor. For example, the entry for Williton, which was held by the king and to which a total of 1 ½ hides and one virgate had been added since 1066 (*DB* 1,6) also states:

> From Alfred's manor of Monksilver has been added to this manor [Williton] 1 customary due, that is 18 sheep a year. This did not belong to Williton before 1066 (*DB* 1,6).

Unfortunately, there is no indication in the survey of where the customary due paid by Monksilver was paid before 1066 (*DB* 1,6; 21,39-40; 35,10).

The criteria used in this chapter to determine the importance of churches do not reflect these changes in landholdings and payments. It is, however, essential to remember that the Domesday Survey only records customary dues for places west of the river Parrett (Lomas 2012, 45-6), and therefore this source of evidence cannot be used in considering the importance of places in the east of the county.

4.2.4 *Estates held by the royal family and their allies*

The evidence from Dorset shows that royal ownership in 1066 is a strong indicator that a church had been an early medieval minster (Hall 2000, 79, 82; see also Hase 1988, 58; 1994, 61-2; Draper 2006, 81, 84). The information provided by the Domesday Survey about landholders in 1066 and 1086, and therefore the physical division of the county into estates and manors, can be utilised to help understand how the Church was organised. The survey provides detailed information about the places held by the royal family and of their close allies such as Wulfward White, a thegn of Queen Edith, who held Mudford in

1066 (*DB* 1,35). These royal estates are spread across the county and frequently two or more royal landholdings are near one another, for example Dulverton, Kingsbrompton and Winsford or Cheddar and Wedmore. Whether this proximity has implications for the *parochiae* of the early medieval minsters will be considered in Chapters 7 and 8.

4.2.5 *Estates held by bishops*

There were major holdings across Somerset by the bishop of Wells and the bishop of Winchester in both 1066 and 1086; that they both had holdings across Somerset probably has its roots in how the Church was originally organised. In the seventh century Wells and Winchester were both within the large Winchester diocese. This was divided by Bishop Aldhelm in 705 AD and the diocese of Sherborne was created which covered the counties of Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, which includes Winchester, and Somerset. The bishop of Sherborne held extensive lands across the diocese including in Somerset (Costen 2011, 214). The diocese of Sherborne remained in existence until the creation in 909 AD of the Wells diocese. This covered Somerset and a small part of Dorset. It is of note that in 1066 the bishop of Wells held no estates in Devon, Dorset, Hampshire or Wiltshire so it is probable that the endowment of the bishopric in 909 AD only included estates in Somerset. Estates held by the bishop in 1066 were still held by him in 1086 but there is uncertainty as to whether additional estates had been granted to him by 1086. For example, the landholder at Winsham before 1066 is stated to be Alfsi but in 1086 Osmund held it from the bishop of Wells (*DB* 6,12). Similarly, Yatton was held by John the Dane in 1066 but was held by the bishop of Wells in 1086 (*DB* 6,14). Unfortunately, there are no extant charters for either Winsham or Yatton so it is impossible to know when the bishop began to hold them. We do know that there was a church at Yatton in 1086 as Benzelin the Archdeacon held it (*DB* 6,14).

A wide network of estates was held by the bishop of Winchester in 1066, the key property being the important royal centre of Taunton (*DB* 2,1). It is probable that this had passed into the hands of the bishop by the late-ninth century and therefore prior to 909 AD (Costen 2011, 192). The other estates held by this bishop included Bleadon (*DB* 2,11) and Pitminster (*DB* 2,10), and the cathedral

church of St Swithun's, Winchester also held Crowcombe (*DB* 19,7). Brictric and Wulfward held Buckland St Mary from Bishop Peter of Litchfield and Chester in 1066, but although they still held Buckland St Mary in 1086 it was from the king (*DB* 47,1). This change in landholder from the bishop to the king has already been noted for Carhampton church. This was also the case at Kilmersdon (*DB* 16,14) and this is intriguing because the landholding was ½ hide and Exon Domesday records a church at Kilmersdon (Welldon and Wheatley 1967, 194-5) presumably on that ½ hide of land. The landholding at Buckland St Mary was 1 ½ hides, but whether there was a church there in the eleventh century we do not know as there is no early architectural or archaeological evidence.

There was obviously a reason King William took ownership of these churches; Carhampton, Kilmersdon and possibly Buckland St Mary. The question that needs to be asked is: why did King William want to regain ownership of these churches after 1066? What was important about them? Was it that they had been early medieval minsters which had been downgraded?

It seems probable that the answer lies in the 'tenurial revolution' effected by King William which resulted in a 'rebalancing of royal and aristocratic wealth' (Fleming 1991, 230) so that by 1075 'every hide and every ox once held by an Anglo-Saxon earl had escheated' or been taken over by the king (Fleming 1991, 229). Stephen Baxter, after considering previous historical research into how and why the Domesday Survey was completed, came to the view that it was

> designed to make the king's authority manifest in every honour, shire, hundred, manor and household in the kingdom … [and that] … it was best structured to maximise fiscal yields (Baxter 2017, 292-3).

This process can be seen very clearly in the Somerset Domesday where estates held by the Godwinson family in 1066 were held by the king in 1086. For example, Winsford was held in 1066 by Earl Tosti[g], brother of Harold Godwinson but was held by the king in 1086 (*DB* 1,17) and Hardington Mandeville held in in 1066 by Gunhilda, daughter of Earl Godwin, was held by the king in 1086 (*DB* 1,24). There is no indication in the survey as to whether the manors of Winsford and Hardington Mandeville contained churches, but an ideal way for the king to manifest his authority would be to take control of the

early medieval minsters within a shire. Whether Winsford, Hardington Mandeville, and also Carhampton and Kilmersdon were early medieval minsters will be considered in Chapter 6.

4.2.6   *Estates held by monasteries*

There were three monasteries named in the Somerset Domesday Survey, Athelney, Muchelney and Glastonbury. Athelney church (*DB* 10) held Ashill, 1 hide at Bossington near Porlock, Hamp near Bridgwater, Ilton, Long Sutton, Lyng close to where the monastery was sited, and Seavington. None of these places to date have been considered as having minsters. Muchelney church (*DB* 9) held a limited number of places in 1066; Cathanger, Chipstable, Drayton, Isle Abbotts, West Camel and Ilminster. The latter was the only place to later gain urban status.

The landholdings of Glastonbury church (*DB* 8) were extensive in 1066 and were mainly sited in an arc to the south of Wells. There are no indications in the Domesday Survey that any of the places held by Glastonbury, other than Glastonbury itself, contained a church, except at Brent where Godwin the priest held 1 ½ hides (*DB* 8,33). If Glastonbury Abbey held the estate and the church of, for example Pilton, there would be no need for a specific mention of the church but only for their combined taxable value.

4.2.7   *Financial status of churches*

There are several sources of financial evidence indicative of the relative status of churches in the central Middle Ages, from the Domesday Survey to the *c.*1291 *Taxatio*. For example, only the wealthier churches would have been used to fund a prebend in support of Wells cathedral or appropriated to provide income for a monastery as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.7) and below. Understanding the changing financial fortunes of churches is crucial to understanding when they were important, but also when the decision was made to reduce the income of a church by using it to fund a prebend.

The Domesday Survey provides information about the taxable value of churches and of the land held by churches, but frequently it is impossible to know what the total value of a church and its land would have been, particularly

if there is no mention of a church or no value is given for it. Consequently, the value of churches and church land as included in the survey is not utilised as one of the criteria in assessing the importance of churches.

In some cases both a church and its land are mentioned as for Frome church with a value of £6 in 1086 (*DB* 16,1) and Chewton Mendip church with a value of 40s or £2 (*DB* 1,29). However, in some cases the survey only values the land held by the church:

> In (the lands of of) [North] Petherton church lie 3 virgates of land. Land for 1 plough, which is there. Value 20s. (*DB* 16,7).

In these instances, it appears that the value of the church is not included because the 3 virgates belonging to North Petherton church were held by a member of the king's clergy (*DB* 16,7). However, the manor of North Petherton was held by the king (*DB* 1,3) and presumably it was therefore the king who held the church. Consequently, the information provided by the survey about the churches and their land at Frome and North Petherton is not comparable.

The first evidence that is available to compare the value of churches is that provided by the *c.*1291 *Taxatio* which is a record of the tax collected by Pope Nicholas IV (Astle, et al. eds, Record Commission 1802 a and b). The *Taxatio* does not provide a complete list of churches because any church which was not valuable enough to be taxed was not recorded. In addition, certain categories of church were not taxed including important monasteries such as Glastonbury, or churches held by the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England such as at North Petherton.

One of the criterion used by Hall (2000, 7) to identify important churches in Dorset with a view to distinguishing its early medieval minsters was their *Taxatio* value. This was used for two criteria in Appendix 8, churches with a value of between £13 and £19 and those with a value over £20. The online *Taxatio* database also provides information about which churches were prebendal and whether they had been appropriated.

Prebends were mainly created by the bishops after 1066 and were derived from the pre-Conquest episcopal estate (Greenway 2001, xxii-v). In creating a prebend the bishop was changing the status of a church so that all its income,

from tithes, taxes and fees, was diverted into supporting, for example, the creation of a prebendal stall for a canon in the abbey church at Wells (see Bath *Acta* 1061-1205 No. 46 which establishes the Prebendal system in 1136 for Wells cathedral). Some prebendal churches in Somerset, as in other counties, had their income diverted to an abbey or church outside the county. Old Cleeve, for example, was appropriated as a prebend to the abbey of Le Bec-Hellouin in France (*Taxatio*). In compensation for the loss of its income a prebendal church would be provided with a priest so that the pastoral needs of its local community could be met. Broomfield church (Figure 4.3) provides a good example of how the status of a church could change. It was given as a prebend to Wells cathedral in the late twelfth century by Matilda de Arundel (Bath *Acta* No. 149, 1174 x 1186). Later it was held by the prior and brethren of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England (*Ralph*, Vol. 1, 22, 224 and 423) and because the hospital paid no taxes there is no record of the church in the *Taxatio*. It is of note that Broomfield church has a large partially curvilinear churchyard in which was found 'a single vertically set slab of Morte slate, possibly part of an early medieval cist grave' (Som. HER Nos 29844 and 28502).

Figure 4.3. St Mary and All Saints [modern dedication] *church, Broomfield: looking at the eastern end of the building. The church is on a high point above the vale of Taunton Deane; the house on the left of the picture is sited below the level of the churchyard (author's photo).*

There is good evidence that the churches granted as prebends were early medieval minsters which were no longer required to provide a significant role in providing pastoral care. Blair (2005, 363-7) has considered this downgrading of churches, and states:

> Hence the most characteristic fate of minster endowments as seen in the Domesday Book: to be annexed [as prebends] to the support of royal, noble, or episcopal clerks (Blair 2005, 363).

Even by 1066, and to a much greater extent after the Conquest 'a high proportion of the king's more valuable churches' (Blair 2005, 364) had been used to reward royal clerks through the creation of prebends. Whether a church was a prebend is therefore used as a criterion in Appendix 8. It is also acts as a counterbalance for other criteria if a church had a low taxation value in *c.*1291 or indeed if it is not named in the *Taxatio*.

A few churches were appropriated as prebends for example, Carhampton, Old Cleeve and Doulting (see Appendix 5), but many churches were simply appropriated. This meant that the tithes, either in total or partially, were no longer paid to the incumbent of a church but were paid to another religious institution. This left the incumbent priest with the income from church taxes and fees for pastoral care such as burials, and a proportion of the tithes or other income. Subsequently the religious institution, as rector of the church, frequently then decided to create a vicarage (a term which refers to the rights of the vicar as well as to his house and land).

The creation of vicarages in both France and England was regulated by the Norman Council of Lillebonne in 1080 which dealt with the 'impropriation of churches to monasteries and the provision of vicars' (Barlow 1979, 132; see also Moorman 1943, 140-4). When a vicarage was created much of the income of the church was then appropriated and in return a vicar was paid to provide pastoral care. Burnham [on Sea] church is a good example of how the patronage of a church could change its financial circumstances:

> Settlement between the monks of Gloucester and the bishop's clerk concerning two thirds of the tithe of Burnham and confirmation of this and tithe of Brean to the monks (Bath *Acta* 1061-1205 No. 57 (p.46-7) dated *c.*1136 x 1191).

> Then there was a grant appropriating a 100s. a year from Burnham to the prior and monks of Ewyas Harold priory (Herefordshire), a dependency of

Gloucester Abbey, from the church of Burnham (Bath *Acta* 1061-1205 No. 213 (p.161) dated 1195 x 1205).

After a dispute about the patronage of the church it had passed to the bishop of Bath and Wells and subsequently in1306 Burnham church was appropriated to the dean and chapter of Wells (*Taxatio*; *Drokensford*, 28).

Churches were regarded as a source of income and these entries show that this was paramount rather than the provision of pastoral care. Whether a church was appropriated in *c.*1291 is an indication that it was, or had been wealthy, and therefore worth appropriating. This is particularly of note when the *Taxatio* includes no information about the value of a church, as for example at Dulverton, Kingsbrompton, and Long Ashton.

4.2.8 *Mother-churches and chapelries*

It is important to consider which Somerset churches became mother-churches and whether they had previously been early medieval minsters given that Hall (2000) used dependent chapelries in identifying Dorset's minsters. Blair (1994, 69) has argued that based on his historical research in Oxfordshire there is a close correlation between minsters and mother-churches and that even when churches lost status they remained as mother-churches until 1066 (Blair 1994, 116). In Surrey, there is evidence that minsters only had control of chapels into the twelfth century. These appeared to have been founded comparatively late, after *c.*1130, or the minster and chapel(s) had the same landholder (Blair 1991, 107-8). Simon Draper's (2006, 82) landscape archaeology research into the early medieval Church in Wiltshire led him to conclude that dependent chapelries are not a good indicator of early medieval minsters. This echoes a statement made several decades earlier by Mick Aston (1986) when he considered Somerset's post-Roman central places and concluded that:

The high correlation between the known 'minsters' [as identified at that time] and the pre-Conquest estates suggests that other churches may have been more important in the late pre-Conquest/Norman period as mother churches to the large numbers of other churches which were in existence in the Middle Ages (Aston 1986, 58).

In effect, Aston is arguing that frequently there was no correlation between early medieval minsters and the later mother-churches in Somerset. Indeed, there

are strong indications that chapelries cannot be used to identify minsters in Somerset as discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.1.1).

When discussing the relationship between a church and a chapel it is important to state the date at which the relationship is first recorded. This information for Somerset churches and their chapels is included in Appendices 3 and 4 and mapped in Figures 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5. Due to the nature of the evidence these maps are incomplete and do not show all the chapels which were in existence. However, they do illustrate the apparent instability in the relationships between mother-churches and their chapels, for example around Taunton and Doulting.

The Domesday Survey rarely provides information that can assist in understanding the relationships that existed between churches and their later chapelries. An example of a link between a church and its later chapel which is not evidenced in the Domesday Survey is that between Butleigh and Baltonsborough. By the sixteenth century the latter was a chapelry of Butleigh, but there is no evidence of this relationship in 1066/86, the twelfth-century *Acta*, the *c.*1291 *Taxatio* or the fourteenth-century bishops' registers (see Appendix 4). In this case, both Butleigh and Baltonsborough were held in the eleventh century by Glastonbury Abbey, but that is the only link between them in the survey (*DB* 8,12;18; 22; 40), and critically Thorn and Thorn (1980, 370-80, 407-13) show them to be in different hundreds in *c.*1086. In addition, the boundary between Butleigh and Baltonsborough runs along the river Brue and the use of a topographical feature is frequently indicative of a long-standing boundary. Another example, as mentioned earlier, where the Domesday Survey does not show a link is between the chapelries of Catcott, Chilton Polden, Edington and Sutton Mallet and their later mother-church of Moorlinch, a place not even named in the survey (*DB* 8,5; see Figure 3.7).

It may be that sometimes there is a correlation between early medieval minsters and mother-churches as at Taunton, Bruton, Butleigh and Chewton Mendip but until the minsters are securely identified that possible correlation cannot be considered. Whether a church had post-Conquest chapelries has therefore not been used as a criterion in Appendix 8.

4.2.9   *How was the Church organised in pre-Conquest Somerset?*

The ecclesiastical division of Somerset into something close to its nineteenth-century parish structure had taken place by 1066 (see Section 3.2.6). The church buildings known to exist in *c.*1066/86, as mapped in Figure 3.8, show that many Domesday places which later became small nineteenth-century parishes already had churches by the eleventh century. For example, Kelston, West Camel and Uphill which are named in Figure 3.8.

It is important to note that there is architectural or archaeological evidence dating from the eleventh and twelfth centuries for churches in places which are not named in the Domesday Survey, for example Bicknoller, Christon (see Figure 4.4; Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 453) and Midsomer Norton [Norton Radstock]. This also applies to the chapels of Chesterblade, Cothelstone and Flax Bourton (Appendix 7). Wilton is not named in the survey and its church, previously a chapel to St Mary Magdalen in Taunton, is one of the few buildings in Somerset with extant 'Saxon' long and short stonework (Figure 4.2). It is intriguing to consider what the origins of Wilton church might be as it is sited on a sloping hill (26.5m above sea level) on a site above St Mary's in the centre of Taunton (18.5m above sea level).

The first reference found to date for Wilton chapel is in the fourteenth-century register of Bishop Drokensford (*Drokensford*, 69) and yet clearly it was built in stone prior to the Conquest and it is known that a tower was added soon after 1066 (Som. HER Nos. 44482 and 45992). The church was later extended but was not extensively rebuilt as were most Somerset churches in the medieval period. This raises the interesting question as to whether this can be construed as evidence that Wilton church had lost status and was therefore inconsequential? As Wilton is not named in the Domesday Survey, we know nothing about it in 1066. However, it is highly likely that in 1066/86 it was within the manor of Taunton (Thorn and Thorn 1980, 412-3) which was held by the bishop of Winchester. As discussed above, whether a church was held by the royal family or by the Church in the eleventh century is a key indicator of its potential importance.

Figure 4.4.   The church of the Blessed Virgin Mary [modern dedication], Christon: an apparently fine example of two early medieval or early Norman arches either side of a central tower, but all is not as it seems as they were heavily restored using plaster in 1875 (author's photo).

If the evidence for churches with Norman (eleventh-twelfth century-) architectural or archaeological evidence are considered (see Appendix 7) it is clear that eleventh-century Somerset was full of churches. Indeed, as already stated (Section 3.3), the percentage of later nineteenth-century parishes which are known to have had a church or chapel in the thirteenth century was more than 72%. The question is how to determine which of these churches were pre-eminent prior to the Conquest?

4.3   CRITERIA TO ASSESS THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCHES

Over 400 churches and 200 plus chapels have been identified potentially as having been established by the end of the eleventh century, hence the need to prepare a shortlist for further analysis. Appendix 8 is based on the shortlist of potentially important churches. The first set of criteria used to create the list was designed to be as broad as possible, so that any church, or chapel that might have been an early medieval church of any importance would be included. These criteria were: that a church:

- had a nineteenth-century parish of more than 3,000 acres or that the associated Domesday Survey place was taxed on a minimum of 50 hides; and/or
- had a *c.*1291 *Taxatio* value of £13 or more; and/or
- was a prebend or appropriated.

These criteria therefore ensure that if any early medieval church, or its parish, had lost significance for any reason it was still included in the initial shortlist. For example, Taunton was divided in the nineteenth century into two parishes, St Mary's and St James's, but their total acreage was only 2,755, however it was taxed in 1066 on 54 hides (*DB* 2,1). Similarly, Carhampton church only had a taxable value in *c.*1291 of £12 13s 4d, while we do not even know the value of Kilmersdon church. All three of these churches, Carhampton, Kilmersdon and Taunton, have in the past been identified as minsters or probable minsters (see Table 3.1).

4.3.1   *Criteria used in Appendix 8*

The eleven criteria used in Appendix 8 are discussed below. The first column of the table lists the name of the church or chapel; it is colour coded in accordance with the key above the table and indicates pre-Conquest or royal or ecclesiastical landholders in 1066. The scoring system intertwines the criteria to provide compensatory weighting where it is known there is a lack of evidence or the evidence is partial. In addition, the scoring system is designed to weight more heavily the three criteria used by Hall (2000, 7) which are discussed above.

Criterion 1. Place recorded in Domesday Survey (Thorn and Thorn 1980); to distinguish them from places with churches which were not recorded in the survey – 1 point.

Criterion 2. Evidence of a church, priest and/or land held by a church in the Domesday Survey – 2 points or 1 if the evidence is insecure. It is important to note that the following churches are recorded in the survey but scored 8 or less against the criteria used in Appendix 8, Long Ashton (*DB* 5,34) and 'Pignes' [Horsey Pignes] near Bridgwater (*DB* 46,6). In addition, at Thorn Coffin (*DB* 19,78) a priest is recorded as holding 2 hides but there may not have been a church there.

Criterion 3. There is evidence that the place was in royal ownership in 1066 according to the Domesday Survey, or recorded in a pre-Conquest royal grant, or mentioned in King Alfred's will – 3 points or 1 if the evidence is insecure.

Criterion 4. Place held by an ecclesiastical body or a bishop in 1066 according to the Domesday Survey, if not also recorded in a pre-Conquest royal grant, or mentioned in King Alfred's will – 3 points or 1 if the evidence is insecure.

Criterion 5. Architectural or archaeological evidence that the church was in existence in the twelfth century or earlier (see Appendix 9) – 2 points or 1 if the evidence is insecure.

Criterion 6. Place had at least a 50 hide estate in 1066 according to the Domesday survey; this is important for example, with regard to Taunton due to its low nineteenth-century acreage – 3 points.

Criterion 7. Or the place had a nineteenth-century parish of 3,000-5,000 acres (Kain and Oliver 1995); for this criterion and 8 below the acreage is combined if two later parishes equated to one Domesday place, for example East and West Pennard – 3 points.

Criterion 8. Place had a nineteenth-century parish of 5,000 acres or more (Kain and Oliver 1995) – 4 points.

Criterion 9. Importance in the eleventh to twelfth century; whether the church is listed in the bishop's twelfth-century *Acta*, or if no Domesday Survey evidence for the existence of a church and it was prebendal; identifying prebendal churches is discussed in Chapter 3. This alternative is essential because not all churches were under the bishops' jurisdiction, for example Cannington church which was held by the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England – 2 points.

Criterion 10. *Taxatio* value of church *c.*1291 of between £13-£19, or clearly in existence but exempt from taxation as Cannington was – 3 points.

Criterion 11. *Taxatio* value of church *c.*1291 of £20 or more, or if exempt from taxation and there is Domesday Survey evidence for the existence of a church or it was Prebendal. For example, Broomfield church which was granted to Wells as a prebend in 1174 x 1186 (Bath *Acta* 1061-1205 Nos. 149 and 153) but was later not taxed as held by Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England. It is important to note that some prebends covered more than one church and therefore that it is not possible to distinguish the individual value of each church – 4 points.

To assess whether the criteria and the system of weighting were appropriate, the previously proposed or probable minsters as listed in Table 3.1, have been listed in Table 4.1 together with the number of points they score in Appendix 8. The maximum points that any Somerset church scores is 18 and four of the churches in Table 4.1 do so, in fact they all have high scores except for four which score 10 or less. Two, Athelney and Muchelney, were monasteries while Aller was an important post-Roman church and Long Ashton was identified as being established as an initial minster but neither became parochial minsters. It is important to note that the scoring in Appendix 8 is designed to identify churches more important than their neighbouring churches and not necessarily early medieval minsters.

Table 4.1.   Importance rating for churches previously proposed as minsters or probable minsters by other researchers (Table 3.1; Aston 1986, 75-6; Hill 1989, 155-7; Costen 1992, 143-57; Hase 1994, 47-81; and Costen 2011, 177-224).

Church (names as Table 3.1)	Points from Appendix 8
Chewton Mendip	18
Crewkerne	18
Frome	18
North Curry	18
Cannington	17
Carhampton	17
Congresbury	17
Glastonbury	17
Keynsham	17
Kilmersdon	17
Milborne Port	17
South Petherton	17
Chew Magna	16
Milverton	16
Banwell	15
Bedminster	15
Bruton	15
Curry Rivel	15
Doulting	15
East Pennard	15
Ilminster	15
North Petherton	15
Taunton	15
Bath	14
Cheddar	14
Martock	14
Northover	14
Pitminster	14
Stogumber	14
Wells	14
Yatton	13
St Decumans	12
Athelney	10
Muchelney	10
Aller	9
Long Ashton	8

4.3.2   *Scoring system used in Appendix 8*

The scoring system used in Appendix 8 is designed to identify Somerset's pre-eminent early medieval churches using pre-Conquest and later evidence. The points given for each criterion are detailed at the beginning of the table. The weighting is designed to ensure that where a source of evidence is not

available, for example that there is no evidence of a church in the Domesday Survey, there is compensation for the lack of data by using a different source of evidence.

For example, 2 points are given for evidence that the church existed in the Domesday Survey so 2 points are also given if there is physical evidence that a church existed in the twelfth century or earlier. Similarly, more than one source of evidence is used to indicate importance in the late-thirteenth century. So that when a church is not taxed in *c.*1291 and there is evidence of it having had a church in the Domesday Survey and/or is a prebend, the church is scored as if it had a taxable income of £20 or more.

Likewise, if a church is listed in the *Taxatio* as having a low income and the church was prebendal, and had therefore been stripped of income, it is scored as if it had a taxable value of £13-£19. Two examples are given below for Ilton and Whitchurch.

- Ilton was named in the Domesday Survey (1 point) as being held by Athelney Abbey in 1066 (2 points) (*DB* 10,1); it was a prebend (additional 2 points because it was a prebend despite not being mentioned in the Episcopal *Acta*); it's *Taxatio* value was £12 (additional 3 points because it was a prebend despite being valued below £13), plus because there is physical evidence that Ilton church existed in the twelfth century (2 points).

- Total points for Ilton church were therefore 11, without any weighting its value would have been 6 points; see Figure 4.5 based on the 1st revision OS map, figure 16 (Ellison 1983), Ilton Tithe Map dated c.1840, and maps drawn in 1803 (DD/WY/9/2/66) and 1825 (DD/WY/9/2/29). Ilton church is identified as being on a post-Roman site (see Figure 4.5) but note that the settlement morphology around the church is rectilinear and not curvilinear as might be expected.

Ilton church contains twelfth-century elements with the tower in an 'early' (twelfth to thirteenth century) position over the south porch (Orbach and Pevsner 2011, 379).
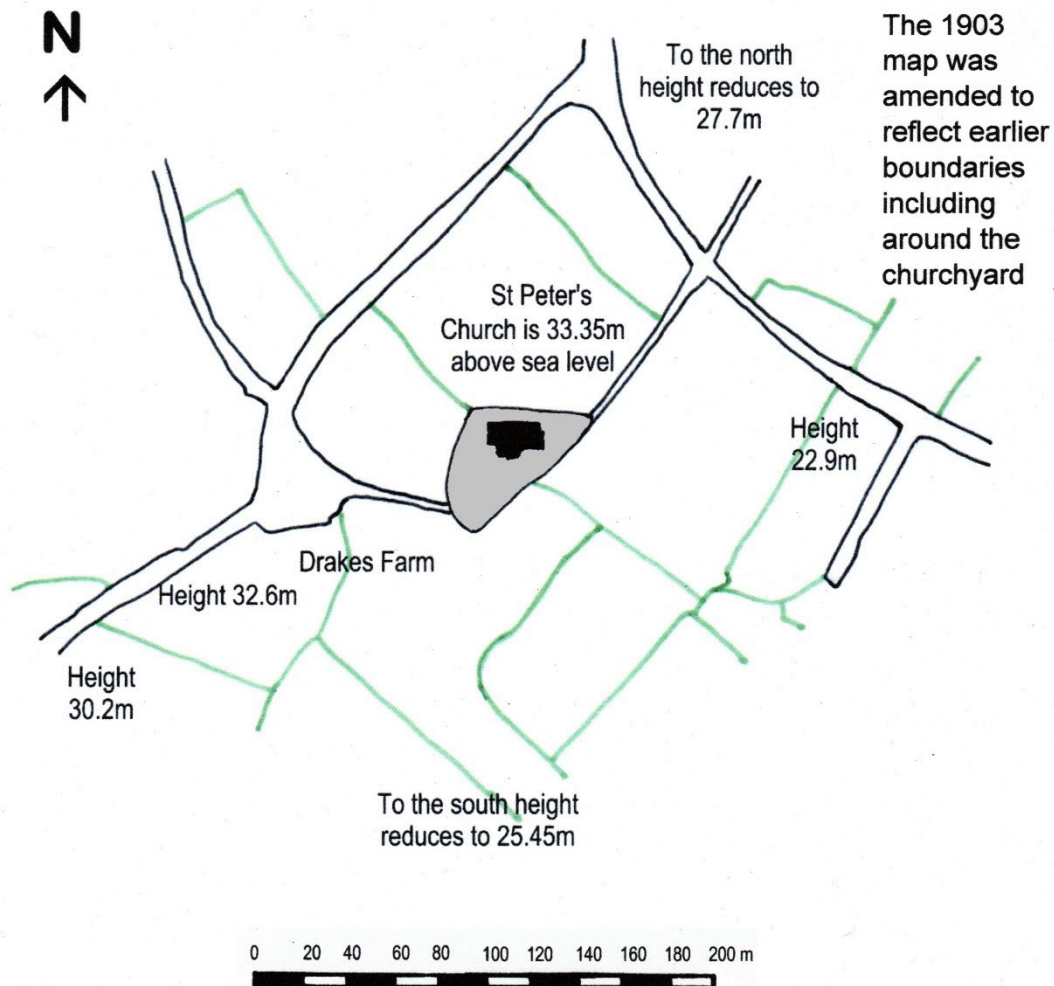
Figure 4.5.   *Map depicting the settlement morphology around St Peter's church, Ilton on the top of a small hill (c.33 metres above sea level); the wetlands to the south are about 9 metres lower. Map based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1903, Landmark Information Group, UK (downloaded from <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap), figure 16 (Ellison 1983), Ilton Tithe Map dated c.1840, and maps drawn in 1803 (DD/WY/9/2/66) and 1825 (DD/WY/9/2/29).*

- Whitchurch is not named in the Domesday Survey, but it was probably held by the royal family pre-Conquest (charter S1042); opinions on the charter are mixed but Keynes (1997, 230 note 136, 232-8, 257, 260) is of the view that it may have an authentic basis (1 point). The church was a prebend and named in the Episcopal *Acta* (2 points); its *Taxatio* value was £8 (additional 3 points because it was a prebend despite being valued below £13), plus because there is physical evidence that a church existed at Whitchurch in the twelfth century (2 points).

- Total points for Whitchurch church were therefore 8, without any weighting its value would have been 5.

The church at Whitchurch, the name of which means white church, was granted to Keynsham Abbey in the late-twelfth century (La Trobe-Bateman, 6); this perhaps prompted the building or rebuilding of the church *c.*1190. The church includes a twelfth-century tower and other twelfth-century features and has a cruciform layout (Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 715-6). The settlement morphology around the church is, as for Ilton, rectilinear with the church having a rectilinear churchyard on top of a hill, see Figure 4.6 based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3 and the Whitchurch Tithe Map dated c.1840; no earlier maps have been located.
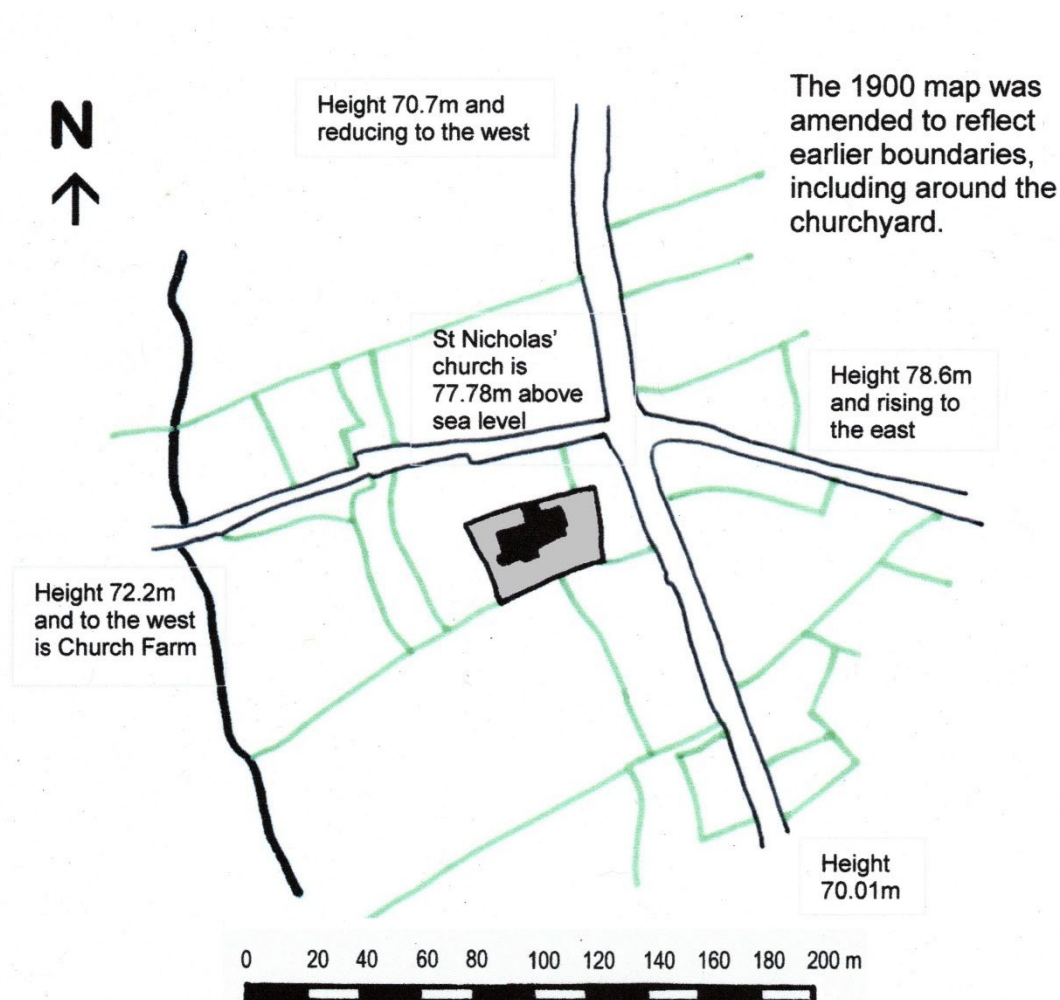
Figure 4.6. *Map depicting the field layout and settlement morphology of Whitchurch based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1900, Landmark Information Group, UK (downloaded from <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap) and Whitchurch Tithe Map dated c.1840; no earlier maps have been located.*

Appendix 8 only includes those churches which scored 6 or more points against the criteria; a number of these would not have been important early medieval churches for three key reasons:

- Some were probably post-Roman (dating from before the late-sixth century) churches which retained some importance but were not pre-eminent. One possibility is West Buckland church (Figure 4.7) and another is Langport church because it is sited on a high point above the low-lying wetlands around the river Isle (see Figure 5.4).

Figure 4.7.   St Mary's church, West Buckland: looking NNE. It is identified as on a post-Roman site and is within a large curvilinear churchyard on top of a hill (72m above sea level) (author's photo).

- Some post-Roman churches would have had their income and lands taken over to support the establishment of an early medieval minster, or a later new church which was built in a more accessible place; one possibility is the suppression of Raddington church in favour of Wiveliscombe church. Another possibility is the suppression of West Buckland church (Figure 4.7), which is sited in a large hill-top curvilinear enclosure, in favour of a new church in Wellington, which is sited in a

small rectilinear churchyard. This may have occurred after West Buckland/Wellington was granted to either the bishop of Sherborne or the bishop of Wells by the king (charter S380 dated 899 x 909 AD grant to Asser, bishop of Sherborne; or charter S1042 dated 1065 grant to bishopric of Wells which may not be genuine, see comment above). It may well have been *c.*909 AD when the Wells Diocese was created.

- Some churches will have acquired additional income after the Conquest and therefore their importance and taxable value would have increased after 1066; one possibility is Moorlinch which is not listed in the Domesday Survey.

4.4   WHICH CHURCHES WERE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THEIR NEIGHBOURING CHURCHES IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD?

Appendix 8 includes the importance rating for each church thereby facilitating comparison between them. All the churches scoring more than 15 in the Appendix are listed in Table 4.2. It will be immediately clear that one church, South Brent scores 17, and is in addition to those listed in Table 4.1 as scoring 17 or 18. There are fourteen churches scoring 17 and 18 in Appendix 8 and twelve of these are listed in both Tables 4.1 and 4.2, but only two of the eight churches scoring 16 in Appendix 8 are listed in Table 4.1. Similarly, only eighteen of the twenty-six churches scoring 14 and 15 in Appendix 8 are listed in Table 4.1. therefore, most churches which have been proposed as probable or possible early medieval minsters, have a score of 14 or more in Appendix 8, which is a good indication that the weighting system which was adopted is appropriate. The criteria used has identified which churches were more important than their neighbouring churches in the early medieval period.

It is clear, that given the number of other churches with a score of between 14 and 18, that some of those churches might also have been early medieval minsters to ensure that there was parochial provision across the county. Chapter 6 considers the organisation and geography of the early *parochiae* in Somerset.

Table 4.2 provides the opportunity to examine how the thirty-four churches scoring between 18 and 15 meet the Appendix 8 criteria. It is immediately obvious that Table 4.2 shows there is a high degree of consistency:

- all the churches were held in, or before 1066, by either the royal family or by an ecclesiastical body;
- all but four of the churches were appropriated to a religious body, or held as a prebend;
- if it is assumed that the church mentioned in the Domesday Survey at Brent was at South Brent, and if East Brent is not counted, then the percentage of churches in the table for which there is evidence in the survey is *c.*57%;
- if again East Brent church is not counted, then the percentage of churches with architectural and/or archaeological evidence that they were in existence by the twelfth century is 80%;
- all the parishes for these churches had a nineteenth-century acreage of more than 3,000 acres, except for Taunton which had more than 50 taxable hides in the Domesday Survey;
- *c.*83% of the churches are included in the twelfth-century bishops' *Acta*, and of the others, five are listed in the Domesday Survey, while Kingsbury Episcopi was a prebendal church (*Taxatio*);
- the taxable value of these churches, if the three that were not taxed in *c.*1291 and North Petherton church which was not fully taxed are excluded, then all the churches had a taxable value of more than £19 except for Carhampton. However, Carhampton was both a prebend and appropriated and as discussed earlier it appears that by 1066 it had already lost status and was no longer as important as it had been.

Of the churches listed in Table 4.2 scoring more than 15 points, 19 or *c.*54%, had chapels before 1300. Many of the places at which the chapels were sited are not mentioned in the Domesday Survey and were therefore probably within the same estate or manor in 1066 as their mother-church. Only eight of the churches, seven of which were held by the royal family in 1066 or had been pre-Conquest, had two or more chapels and Glastonbury Abbey had two chapels.

Table 4.2. *All churches with high scores (15-18 points) showing they were more important than their neighbouring churches (see Appendix 8)*

Church[1]	Prebend - P; appropriated - A; held by St J of J[2]	DB church, priest, land	Physical evidence before 12thC	19thC acreage	In 12thC bishops' *Acta* or in *DB* or P	c.1291 taxable value	Total score in Appendix 8
Chewton Mendip	A	YES	YES	5809	YES	£57 19s 4d	18
Crewkerne	-	YES	YES	6117	No - in *DB*	£50 13s 4d	18
Frome	A	YES	YES	7092	YES	£33 13s 4d	18
North Curry	P	YES	YES	11027	YES	£51 0s 0d	18
Brent [South]	P	?YES[3]	YES	6463	YES	H and B preb.[4]	17
Cannington	St J of J	YES	YES	5015	No - in *DB*	Not taxed	17
Carhampton	P; A	YES	YES	5724	YES	£12 13s 4d	17
Congresbury	A	YES	YES	4443	No - in *DB*	£40 0s 0d	17
Glastonbury Abbey	Monastery	YES	YES	7083	YES	Not taxed	17
Keynsham	A - Aug. [5]	YES	YES	4171	YES	£38 6s 8d	17
Kilmersdon	St J of J	YES	YES	3460	YES	Not taxed	17
Milbourne Port	A	YES	YES	3277	YES	£23 6s 8d	17
South Petherton	A - Aug.	YES	YES	3311	YES	£60 0s 0d	17
Wells	Cathedral	YES	YES	14918	YES	Not taxed	17
Chew Magna	-	-	YES	5006	YES	£33 6s 8d	16
Ditcheat	-	-	YES	5511	YES	£20 0s 0d	16
Milverton	P	YES	-	5475	No - in *DB*	£44 13s 4d	16
Old Cleeve	P; A	-	YES	5413	YES	£26 13s 4d	16
Pilton	P	-	YES	5593	YES	£25 0s 0d	16
Stogursey	A	-	YES	8893	YES	£30 0s 0d	16
Wedmore	P	-	YES	5779	YES	£40 0s 0d	16
Banwell	A	-	YES	4829	YES	£34 6s 8d	15
Bedminster	P	YES	-	4161	YES	£52 0s 0d	15
Brent [East]	A	? YES[3]	-	6463	YES	£19 9s 8d	15
Bruton	A - Aug.	-	YES	3631	YES	£26 13s 4d	15
Chard	P	-	YES	5449	YES	Combe preb. [6]	15
Curry Rivel	-	YES	?	4108	No - in *DB*	£20 0s 0d	15
Doulting	P; A	-	YES	3600	YES	£40 0s 0d	15
East Pennard	A	-	YES	5892	YES	£13 6s 8d	15
Ilminster	P; A	YES	-	4050	YES	£22 10s 0d	15
Kingsbury Episcopi	P	-	YES	3646	No - P	£26 13s 4d	15
North Petherton	A - St J of J	YES	-	10336	YES	£7 0s 0d – not fully taxed	15
Shapwick	A	-	YES	3781	YES	£21 0s 0d	15
Taunton St Mary's	P; A	YES	-	50 hides – 1300+	YES	£70 0s 0d incls. chapels	15

KEY: [1] Appendix 8 colour code, see below, relates to 1066 ownership or pre-Conquest royal holding. [2] St J of J – Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England. [3] *DB* evidence is for a church at Brent. [4] H and B preb. – part of Huish and Brent prebend; value of individual churches not known. [5] Aug. – held by Augustinian Order. [6] Combe preb. – part of Combe prebend; value of individual churches not known.

Colour code:

	Athelney Abbey		Royal Holding including by Wulfard White thegn of
	Bath Abbey		Queen Edith; all held in 1086 by king.
	Glastonbury Abbey		St Edward's Church, Shaftesbury
	Bishop of Litchfield & Chester		Bishop of Wells
	Muchelney Abbey		Bishop of Winchester

Table 4.3.   *Churches scoring between 18-15 points in Appendix 8 with details of chapels held pre-1300 (see Appendix 3).*

Church	Churches previously proposed as minsters or probable minsters (see Table 3.1)	Total score in Appendix 8	No. of pre-1300 chapels	Details of chapels If chapel = name of a Domesday place it is in **bold**
Chewton Mendip	YES	18	6	Easton Major within Ston Easton, **Emberrow**, **Farrington Gurney**, **Hallatrow**, Paulton, **Ston Easton**
Crewkerne	YES	18	1	Wayford
Frome	YES	18	1	Egford
North Curry	YES	18	1	West Hatch
Brent [South]	-	17	0	-
Cannington	YES	17	0	-
Carhampton	YES	17	0	-
Congresbury	YES	17	1	Week St Lawrence
Glastonbury Abbey	YES	17	2	Beckery, Glastonbury Tor
Keynsham	YES	17	0	-
Kilmersdon	YES	17	0	-
Milbourne Port	YES	17	0	-
South Petherton	YES	17	5	**Barrington**, Chillington, **Lopen**, **Sevington** St Mary, St John's chapel in South Petherton
Wells	YES	17	0	-
Chew Magna	YES	16	?1	11thC charter link to later chapel of Dundry
Ditcheat	-	16	0	-
Milverton	YES	16	1	Torrell's **Preston**
Old Cleeve	-	16	1	Leighland [as **Leigh** in *DB*]
Pilton	-	16	1	**North Wootton**
Stogursey	-	16	1	**Lilstock**
Wedmore	-	16	5	Biddisham, Blackford, Chapel **Allerton**, Mark, Mudgley
Banwell	YES	15	1	Churchill
Bedminster	YES	15	2	Abbotts Leigh (not adjacent few miles away from Bedminster), Alveston, Gloucs.,
Brent [East]	-	15	0	-
Bruton	YES	15	4	South **Brewham** [with North **Brewham**], **Pitcombe**, **Redlynch**, Wyke Champflower
Chard	-	15	0	-
Curry Rivel	YES	15	0	-
Doulting	YES	15	0	-
East Pennard	YES	15	1	West **Pennard**
Ilminster	YES	15	0	-
Kingsbury Episcopi	-	15	0	-
North Petherton	YES	15	5	Chedzoy, **Durston**, **Huntworth**, West **Newton**, **Woolmersdon**
Shapwick	-	15	0	-
Taunton St Mary's	YES	15	5	Bishops Hull, Ruishton, Staplegrove, **Stoke St Mary**, Taunton St James'

KEY: Appendix 8 colour coding (see above) relates to 1066 ownership or pre-Conquest royal holding.

Figure 4.8.   Map of churches scoring 12 or more points as listed in Appendix 8

- Churches scoring 17 – 18 points
- Churches scoring 15 – 16 points
- Churches scoring 12 – 14 points

Scales
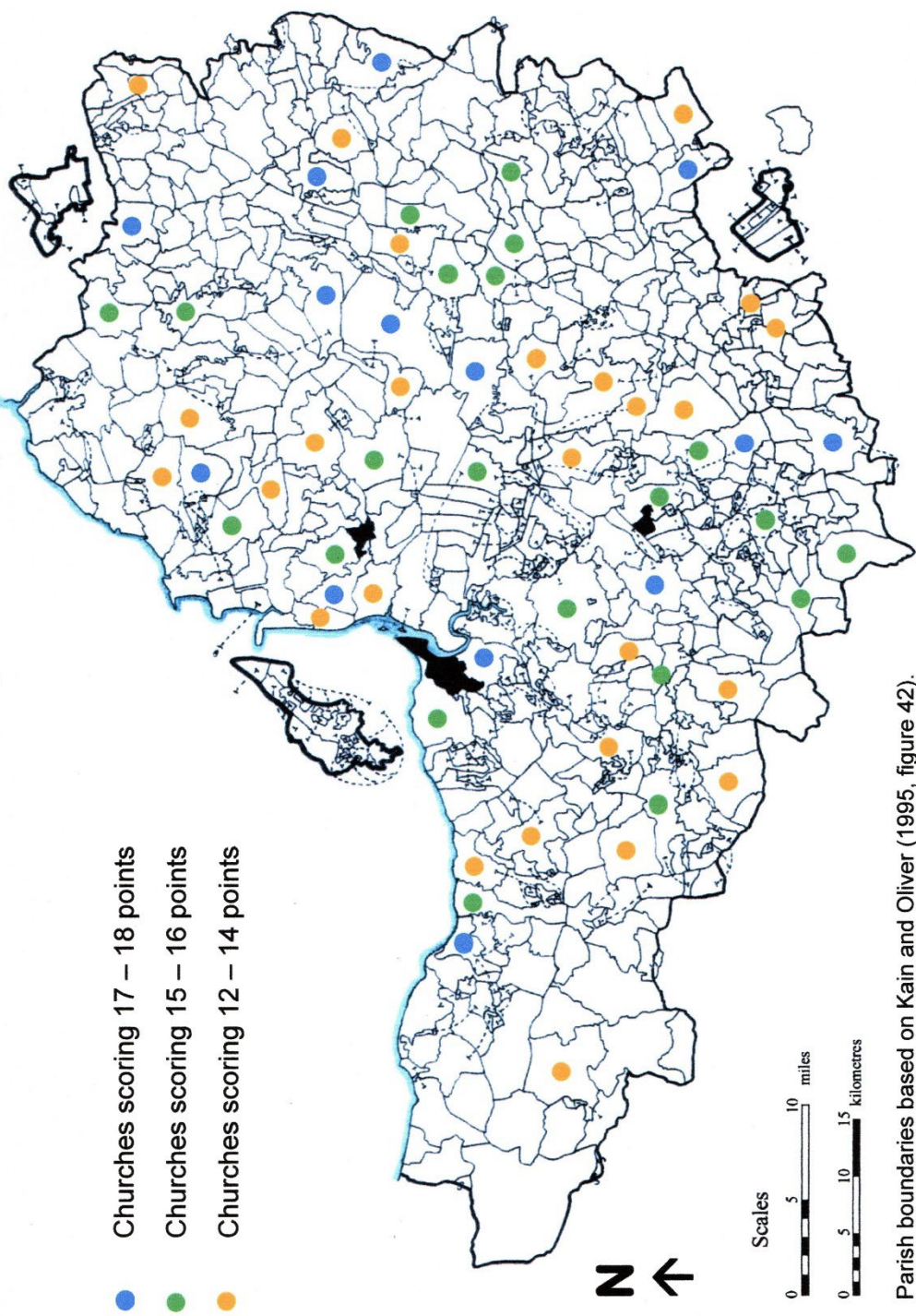
Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

Table 4.3 shows that several churches previously proposed as minsters, or probable minsters, are not recorded as having chapels pre-1300, for example Cannington, Milborne Port and Wells. This elucidates why it is not appropriate to use dependent chapels as a criterion to identify the pre-eminent early medieval churches in Somerset. It also provides evidence to support Mick Aston's (1986, 58) statement, discussed above, that churches, other than minsters, may have been later mother-churches.

The churches scoring 12 or more in Appendix 8 have been mapped across the county as shown in Figure 4.8. There is a tendency for the churches with higher scores to be geographically grouped together for example, Cheddar (scores 14) and Wedmore (scores 16), Banwell (scores 15) and Congresbury (scores 17), Doulting (scores 15) and Pilton (scores 16), all these churches are in eastern Somerset. West of the river Parrett the same pattern can be identified and Milverton (scores 16) is about 5.5kms from Wiveliscombe (scores 14), Taunton (scores 15) is about 5.5kms from Pitminster (scores 14) and St Decumans (scores 12) is about 6.5kms from Stogumber (scores 14). In Chapter 8 these groupings of pre-eminent churches will be assessed in relation to the wider landscape to see if the groupings relate to natural divisions within the landscape, for example, rivers, low-lying land subject to flooding, or upland ridges.

4.5   CONCLUSION

It is clear that by using a set of criteria based on definitive evidence drawn from the tenth to eleventh centuries it is possible to rate the importance of churches in relation to one another and therefore to identify the churches that were pre-eminent. The key question to be addressed is whether it is possible to discern if churches within each group differ in how each site relates to the landscape (Conzen 1968; Roberts 1987; Blair and Sharpe 1992; Klingelhöfer 1992; Blair 2005; Turner 2006a; 2006c; Billing 2008). Importantly, it enables the churches which had lost significance to be identified. Consideration will be given to those churches which others have identified as minsters or probable minsters which have a low importance rating, for example Long Ashton with a score of 8 points. Are these the lost minsters of Somerset?

This systematic approach enabled a distribution pattern for pre-eminent churches to be identified across Somerset and in Chapter 5 the royal *villae* associated with these churches are identified. Chapter 6 then establishes the geographical and parochial organisation of the early medieval Church. Lastly, Chapters 7 and 8 use the importance rating of each church, together with historical evidence, topographical and morphological assessments to consider how the Church developed in Somerset.

Chapter 5

IDENTIFYING SOMERSET'S ROYAL *VILLAE*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with how Somerset's royal *villae* (the term is defined in Section 1.1.3) were identified. This enabled the pre-eminent churches, as identified in Chapter 4 (see Figure 4.8), which are within the locality of a royal *villa*, to be systematically assessed. Currently, there are differences of opinion about which places in Somerset should be recognised as royal *villae* as shown in Table 5.1 (Hill 1989, 82-91; Sawyer 1983, 292-8; Turner 2006a, 61-70; Costen 2011, 58-71, 91, 208-9). The similarity between all these secondary authorities is that they rely on primary written evidence. Sam Turner (2006a, 63-6) comments on the paucity of archaeological evidence for the existence of royal *villae*, not just in Somerset, where only the tenth-century site at Cheddar, comprising a royal palace and chapel, have been excavated (Rahtz 1964; Som. HER No. 11442), but across the country. Previously it was difficult to discuss the relationship between Somerset's royal *villae* and its early medieval minsters because there was no consensus as to which places should be identified as royal *villae* due to a lack of evidence. Therefore, it was essential to develop a systematic process to identify Somerset's royal *villae* and by using a wide range of historical evidence, some of which is detailed in Tables 5.2a and 5.2b, and by looking at the topographical and morphological relationships between royal *villae* and nearby churches, it proved possible to identify many of Somerset's royal *villae* and these have been mapped, see Figure 5.1.

Understanding the relationships which existed between royal *villae* and nearby churches is central to this thesis. Critically, it is important to consider whether it was the royal *villae* or the churches which were on sites of long-standing importance within the landscape. As discussed in Chapter 1 the area around sites used for pagan rituals were fixed points within the landscape and

frequently continued to be so, consequently they were often appropriated by the post-Roman and early medieval Church (see Section 1.2).

Table 5.1   *Identification of* royal *villae: secondary sources (Hill 1989, 82-91; Sawyer 1983, 292-8;* Turner 2006a, 61-70*; Costen 2011, 58-71).*

Place	Secondary sources
Bath	Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a). Proprietary minster – first of Mercia and then of Wessex (Costen 2011, 208, 209)
Bedminster	Royal holding since 7thC (Costen 2011)
Bruton	Royal holding since 7thC (Costen 2011)
Burnham	Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a)
Cannington	Royal '*tūn*' (Sawyer 1983). Royal holding (Costen 2011). Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a)
Carhampton	Royal '*tūn*' (Sawyer 1983). Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a)
Cheddar [incl. manor of Wedmore at *DB*]	Cheddar and Wedmore almost certainly = 1 royal estate for a long time (Costen 2011). Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a)
Chewton Mendip	Royal '*tūn*' (Sawyer 1983). Important royal centre (Costen 2011). Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a)
Old Cleeve ['comital manor']	Earl Harold held it *c.*1052 (Costen 2011, 91).
Congresbury ['comital manor']	Congresbury probably centre of larger territory (Costen 2011). Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a)
Crewkerne ['comital manor']	Royal '*tūn*' (Sawyer 1983). Royal holding since 7thC (Costen 2011). Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a).
Curry Rivel	Royal holding since 7thC (Costen 2011).
North Curry ['comital manor']	Important early royal estate (Costen 2011)
Dulverton ['comital manor']	Earl Harold held it *c.*1052 (Costen 2011, 91).
Frome Selwood	Royal *Villa* (Hill 1989). Royal holding since 7thC (Costen 2011). Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a).
Keynsham	Important early royal estate (Costen 2011)
Kingsbury Episcopi	Important royal centre (Costen 2011).
Kingsbury [Milborne Port later town]	Royal holding since 7thC as Kingsbury Regis (Costen 2011).
North Petherton	Royal holding since 7thC (Costen 2011).
South Petherton	Royal '*tūn*' (Sawyer 1983). Royal holding since 7thC (Costen 2011).
Somerton	Royal Vill (Hill 1989). Royal '*tūn*' (Sawyer 1983). Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a). Royal holding since 7thC (Costen 2011).
Taunton	Royal '*tūn*' (Sawyer 1983). Important early royal estate (Costen 2011). Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a)
Wedmore [within manor of Cheddar in 1066]	878 Royal *villa* (Hill 1989). Royal '*tūn*' (Sawyer 1983). Royal *villa* (Turner 2006a)
Williton [19thC parish St Decumans]	Royal holding since 7thC (Costen 2011).

Figure 5.1.   Map of royal *villae* in Somerset

- *Royal villae* **west of the river Parrett;**
  using the 19thC parish around each *villa* as a proxy
  for its early medieval territory

- *Royal villae* **east of the river Parrett;**
  using the 19thC parish around each *villa* as a proxy
  for its early medieval territory

Number key on next page

Map based on information collated from Tables 5.1, 5.2a, 5.2b and 5.3).
Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

Key to Figure 5.1.   *Initial identification of* royal *villae in Somerset.*

No.	Royal *villa*	No.	Royal *villa*	No.	Royal *villa*
1	Bath	15	Curry Rivel	29	North Curry
2	Bedminster	16	Dulverton	30	North Petherton
3	Bruton	17	Frome Selwood	31	Old Cleeve
4	Burnham	18	Glastonbury	32	Pennard [East & West]
5	Cannington	19	Hardington Mandeville	33	Pilton
6	Capton [in 19thC Stogumber parish]	20	Henstridge	34	Portbury
7	Carhampton	21	Keynsham	35	Queen Camel
8	Chard	22	Kilton	36	Shapwick
9	Cheddar	23	Kingsbrompton	37	Somerton
10	Chew Magna	24	Langford Budville	38	South Petherton
11	Chewton Mendip	25	Martock	39	Taunton
12	Coker [East & West]	26	Kingsbury [in 19thC Milborne Port parish]	40	Wedmore
13	Congresbury	27	Milverton	41	Williton [in 19thC St Decumans parish]
14	Crewkerne	28	Nettlecombe	42	Winsford

NOTE   BR = Brushford

The itineraries of the kings of Wessex indicate the long-term stability of Cheddar, Glastonbury and Somerton (Hill 1989, 83-90). There is archaeological evidence for the importance of Cheddar in the tenth century and for Glastonbury from the sixth and seventh centuries (Gilchrist and Green 2015; Som. HER No. 23603 for Glastonbury Tor and Som. HER No. 23614 for the abbey site). However, this is not true of Somerton despite being on the king's itinerary in both 860 AD and 949 AD (Hill 1989, 83, 89) as there is no archaeological evidence, as at other known royal assembly sites, to show that there was a permanent settlement at Somerton during the late-ninth and early-tenth centuries (Roach 2013, 67-9; Som. HER No. 54507). It therefore cannot be assumed that seventh- to early-ninth-century royal sites were recognisable as stable fixed points within the landscape as frequently many would have been used on an intermittent basis with much of the accommodation being of a relatively temporary nature, such as wooden framed buildings or tents (Blair 2005, 279; 2018, 104-14). The identification of royal *villae*, particularly those dating from the seventh and eighth centuries, is therefore difficult.

Table 5.2a. *Initial identification of* royal *villae which are west of the river Parrett; see Appendix 9 for complete list of* royal *villae*

Place	1066 landholder	Taxation / hidage / ploughlands	Evidence of being important in 11thC or earlier & if stated to be royal *villa*
Burnham	Lay holder – but in KAW[1]	Paid tax for 4 hides; land for 12 ploughs; value £4 (*DB* 24,27).	KAW
Cannington	King Edward	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; pays a proportion of £100 116s. 161/2d to the ora. Proportion of 100 ploughs (*DB* 1,6).	NR[2]; KAW; 'borough right' attached to Old Cleeve
Capton ['comital manor']	Earl Harold	Paid tax for 1 hide. Land for 5 ploughs. Pays 46s of white silver.	-
Carhampton	King	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; pays a proportion of £100 116s. 161/2d to the ora. Proportion of 100 ploughs (*DB* 1,6).	NR; KAW; CD[3]; 'borough right' attached to Old Cleeve
Chard	Bishop of Wells	Paid tax for 8 hides. Value £16. Land for 20 ploughs (*DB* 6,4).	-
Cleeve, Old ['comital manor']	Earl Harold	Paid tax for 4 hides & 1 virgate; pays £23 white silver. Land for 33 ploughs (*DB* 1,13).	Previously received 'borough-right' payments
Coker [East & West] [possible 'comital manor']	Countess Gytha	Paid tax for 7 of the 15 hides; pays £19 12s. of white silver & as much when William the sheriff acquired it. Land for 15 ploughs (*DB* 1,23).	-
Crewkerne ['comital manor']	Edeva (of Godwin family see WF & W 1967, 151, 168-9)	Did not pay tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; pays £46 white silver. Land for 40 ploughs (*DB* 1,20).	KAW; CD
Curry Rivel	King Edward	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; pays £21 50d at 20 pence to the ora. Land for 13 ploughs (*DB* 1,20).	NR; CD
Dulverton ['comital manor']	Earl Harold	Paid tax for 2 ½ hides; pays £11 10s white silver. Land for 11 ploughs (*DB* 1,12).	CD – lost customary due paid by Brushford.
Hardington Mandeville [possible 'comital manor']	Gunhilda, daughter of Earl Godwin	Paid tax for 5 hides but 10 hides there; pays £12 14s of white silver now & when William the Sheriff acquired it. Land for 10 ploughs (*DB* 1,24).	-
Kilton	Lay holder – but in KAW	Paid tax for 10 ½ hides; value was 100s now £7. Land for 10 ploughs (*DB* 25,30).	KAW
Kingsbrompton [possible 'comital manor']	Gytha, wife of Earl Godwin	Paid tax for 10 hides; pays £27 12s. 1d. of white silver. Land for 60 ploughs (*DB* 1,11). NOTE Priest holds 1 of 10 hides in alms from king.	3rd P of Milverton paid as CD there before 1066

Continued on next page

Table 5.2a. *Initial identification of* royal *villae which are west of the river Parrett; see Appendix 9 for complete list of* royal *villae*

Place	1066 landholder	Taxation / hidage / ploughlands	Evidence of being important in 11thC or earlier & if stated to be royal *villa*
Langford Budville ['comital manor']	Godwin son of Harold	Paid tax for 5 hides; value £4 12s. now & when king acquired it. **Land for 10 ploughs** (*DB* 1,16).	-
Milverton	Queen Edith	Paid tax for ½ virgate. Paid £12 at face value. Land for 16 ploughs (*DB* 1,26)	Paid 3rd P to Kingsbrompton.
North Curry ['comital manor']	Earl Harold	Paid tax for 20 hides; whole pays £23 of white silver. Land for 40 ploughs (*DB* 1,19).	-
North Petherton	King Edward	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; pays £42 8s 4d at 20 (pence) to the ora. **Land for 30 ploughs** (*DB* 1,3).	NR; 'borough right' attached to Old Cleeve
South Petherton	King Edward	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; pays £42 100d at 20 pence to the ora. **Land for 28 ploughs** (*DB* 1,4).	NR; CD. Assembly? at Perrott or Petherton at which king signed charter S1116 (Keynes 2013, 153)
Taunton	Bishop of Winchester (pre-Conquest royal grant)	Land for 20 ploughs never paid tax; paid tax for 54 hides & 2 ½ virgates; **paid £50** when Bishop Walkelin acquired it now pays £154 13d with all its dependencies & customary dues. **Land for 100 ploughs** (*DB* 2,1-5).	Received 'borough right' payments; CD
Williton [19thC parish St Decumans]	King Edward	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; pays a proportion of £100 116s. 16 ½d to the ora. **Proportion of land for 100 ploughs** (*DB* 1,6; 13).	NR; 3rd P; 'borough right' attached to Old Cleeve.; CD from Monksilver added to Williton (T & T 1980, 302 note 19,17, 307 note 35,10)
KEY: 1. KAW – King Alfred's will 2. NR – 'night's revenue (farm)' 3. CD – customary due 4. 3rd P – third penny 5. RE – royal event 6. MW – Mercian *witan* 7. WW – Wessex *witan* 8. WF & W – Welldon Finn & Wheatley 1967 9. TT – Thorn & Thorn 1980			

As stated above, in Somerset the only archaeological evidence for a royal *villa* is the tenth-century palace and chapel at Cheddar. A systematic assessment process utilising historical, topographical and morphological evidence was therefore developed in order to identify Somerset's other royal *villae*.

Table 5.2b. *Initial identification of* royal *villae which are east of the river Parrett; see Appendix 9 for complete list of* royal *villae*

Place	1066 landholder	Taxation / hidage / ploughlands	Evidence of being important in 11thC or earlier & if stated to be royal *villa*
Bath	Queen Edith	Paid tax for 20 hides when the shire paid tax; this borough with Batheaston pays £60 at face value. **No ploughlands stated** (*DB* 1,31).	3rd P[4]; RE 973[5]; MW[6] 796, 864; WW[7] 973,1009
Bedminster	King Edward	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are; pays £21 2 1/2d at 20 pence to the ora. Land for 26 ploughs (*DB* 1,7).	Probably NR[2] (see WF & W 1967[8], 170-1; T & T 1980[9], 295 note 1,10)
Bruton	King Edward	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are there. Pays £53 5d at 20 pence to the ora. Land for 50 ploughs (*DB* 1,9).	NR; 3rd P
Cheddar [inc. manor of Wedmore at *DB*]	King	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; paid £21 0s 2 ½d to the ora. Land for 20 ploughs (*DB* 1,2).	*Palatio Regis* 956; *Sede Regali* ?968 (Hill 1981). NR; KAW; WW 940, 956, ?968. Axbridge [included in Cheddar at *DB*] paid 3rd P
Chew Magna	Bishop of Wells	Paid tax for 30 hides; value to the bishop £30. Land for 50 ploughs (*DB* 6,13).	-
Chewton Mendip	Queen Edith	Did not pay tax on 15 hides but paid tax on 14 hides; paid £30 in 1066 at face value. Land for 40 ploughs (*DB* 1,29).	KAW
Congresbury ['comital manor']	Earl Harold	Paid tax for 20 hides; pays £28 15s of white silver. Land for 50 ploughs (*DB* 1,21).	-
Frome Selwood	King	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; pays £53 0s 5d to the ora. Land for 50 ploughs (*DB* 1,8).	NR; RE 955; WW 934; 3rd P
Glastonbury	Glastonbury Church	12 hides never paid tax; value when Abbot Thurston acquired it £10; value in 1086 £20. Land for 30 ploughs (*DB* 8,1).	RE 946; RE 975; WW 745, 975; MW 798
Henstridge ['comital manor']	Earl Harold	Paid tax for 10 hides + 10 hides that never paid tax; pays £23 of white silver, & when William the sheriff acquired it as much. Land for 16 ploughs (*DB* 1,25).	-
Keynsham	Queen Edith	Paid tax for 50 hides; paid £108 at face value. Land for 100 ploughs (*DB* 1,28).	-
Kingsbury [Milborne Port later town]	King Edward	Never paid tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; pays c.£80 white silver. Land for 50 ploughs (*DB* 1,10).	NR; 3rd P
Martock	Queen Edith	Paid tax for 13 hides but 38 hides there; pays £70 at face value and 100s more if Bishop Walkelin has testified. Land for 40 ploughs (*DB* 1,27).	-

Continued on next page

Table 5.2b. *Initial identification of* royal *villae which are east of the river Parrett; see Appendix 9 for complete list of* royal *villae*

Place	1066 landholder	Taxation / hidage / ploughlands	Evidence of being important in 11thC or earlier & if stated to be royal *villa*
Pennard [incl. East & West at DB]	Glastonbury (pre-Conquest royal grant)	Paid tax for 10 hides, however there are 20 hides; value to the abbot £12, was £4 when Abbot Thurston acquired it. Land for 12 ploughs (*DB* 8,21).	-
Pilton	Glastonbury Abbey	Paid tax for 20 hides; land for 30 ploughs + land for 20 ploughs which has never paid tax; value of the whole £24, the value was £16. Manor of Pilton also has land in Shepton [Mallet], Croscombe, [North] Wootton, and Pylle; value of the whole £16 10s between them (*DB* 8,20).	-
Portbury	Godwin	Paid tax for 8 hides; value was and is £15. Land for 18 ploughs (*DB* 5,33).	-
Queen Camel ['comital manor']	Countess Gytha	Paid tax for 8 1/2 hides but 15 hides there; pays £23 of white silver, & as much when William the Sheriff acquired it. Land for 15 ploughs (*DB* 1,22).	-
Shapwick	Glastonbury but presume pre-Conquest royal grant	Paid tax for 30 hides; land for 40 ploughs + land for 20 ploughs which has never paid tax. Value of this manor to the abbot is £12; value to Roger de Courseulles is £19; value to Alfred of 'Spain' is £7; value to Warmund is 10s (*DB* 8,5).	-
Somerton	King Edward	Never pays tax nor is it known how many hides there are there; pays £79 10s 7d at 20 (pence) to the ora. Land for 50 ploughs (*DB* 1,1).	NR; WW 860, 949
Wedmore [within manor of Cheddar in 1066]	King Edward	Did not pay tax on 1 hide but did pay tax on 10 hides; pays £12. Land for 36 ploughs (*DB* 1,2; 6,15).	KAW

KEY: 1. KAW – King Alfred's will   2. NR – 'night's revenue (farm)'   3. CD – customary due   4. 3rd P – third penny   5. RE – royal event   6. MW – Mercian *witan*   7. WW – Wessex *witan*   8. WF & W – Welldon Finn & Wheatley 1967   9. TT – Thorn & Thorn 1980

5.1.1 *Physical evidence for the existence of* royal *villae*

John Blair (2018, 108) recently summed up why it is physically difficult to locate the sites of royal *villae* within the landscape by stating that these sites are rarely of interest to historians and archaeologists because they did not remain as significant places. Indeed, several of the royal *villae* identified in Somerset, for example Kilton which was named in King Alfred's will, drawn up in *c.*885 AD (charter S 1507), were no longer of any importance by 1066, and in Kilton's case possibly by the end of the ninth century. The map of the nineteenth-

century parish of Kilton (number 22 on Figure 5.1) depicts it as a small irregular linear shape surrounded by a series of tiny parishes all indicating the fragmentation of a much larger *parochia*. The church is sited on a high point above a valley; as we shall see, this is typical of an early site presumably with a royal *villa* in the valley below. There is no evidence to indicate when Kilton became a royal *villa* and it may have been important for a relatively brief time, as was true of the royal residence at Llangorse Crannog in Powys (Lane and Resknap 2019; CPAT Regional HER Clywd Powys PRN 630; see also Blair 2005, 279-80) which the archaeological evidence indicates was in use for less than 30 years.

Blair (2005, 276-7, 325; 2018, 107) has noted the possible long-term stability of some royal *villae*, for example the early ninth-century site at Tamworth, Staffordshire where a great hall complex has been excavated. It was an important royal *villa* and was visited several times by the kings of Mercia between 781 and 926 AD (see Hill 1989, 83, 87).

No 'Anglo-Saxon' great hall complexes have been found west of Cowage Farm in Wiltshire. This site is itself an outlier located to the west and south of other excavated hall complexes (Blair 2018, 116, figure 29). It is not surprising that no 'Anglo-Saxon' great hall complexes have been found in Somerset because the 'Anglo-Saxon' kingdom of Wessex only took control of the county in the mid-seventh century (Costen 2011, 25-30) when the building of these complexes had already been abandoned.

In 1988 (revised in 1997) Christopher Arnold completed a historiographical review of the archaeological research which had identified 'Anglo-Saxon' settlement sites across Britain. It is of note that during much of the twentieth century the research was concerned with understanding the artefacts which were excavated and how they could be used to identify societal changes, such as the migration of people (Arnold 1997, 9-18; see also Blair 2018, 12-4). Relatively little attention was given to the layouts of the sites themselves, how they sat within the landscape, or any relationship they might have had to nearby religious sites or churches. In discussing the settlements which have been excavated, for example, Cowdery's Down, Hampshire, Sutton Courtney,

Berkshire and West Stow, Suffolk Arnold (1997, 31-50) describes them as farms and the sites are analysed as agricultural holdings; for a more recent synthesis see Hamerow (2012). Later in the twentieth century attention turned to the identification of high-status sites and Arnold (1997, 218; see also Blair 2018, 107) highlights the difficulties inherent in choosing the criteria by which these sites might be recognised. One possibility was that some of the excavated rectangular buildings, or great halls, were particularly large as at Northampton, Northamptonshire and Yeavering, Northumberland. However, it has now been determined that these high-status sites were abandoned by the 'Anglo-Saxon' elite during the seventh century as their need for large 'civic-ceremonial centres' declined (McBride 2018, 447; see also Blair 2018, 125-31).

Northampton is of particular interest because, associated with the eighth-century minster, a large stone rectangular hall was excavated together with artefacts usually associated with a high-status site (Arnold 1997, 218-20). Yeavering was named as a *villa regia* by Bede. He writes that Paulinus, a missionary from Rome, preached to crowds of people before baptising them, so it was clearly a high-status royal and religious site, but according to Bede it was later abandoned (*Bede*, 132; Morris 1997, 75; Blair 2018, 135-6). Blair (2018, 107, 114-31, 229) has recently reviewed these seventh-century sites, such as at Yeavering and Tamworth, which include great halls. He concludes by noting that their spatial relationship with prehistoric earthworks is so close that they should be regarded as 'secondary and peripheral additions' to these ancient sites (Blair 2018, 124-5). This echoes the views expressed by Claudia Moser and Cecelia Feldman (2014b, 1-11) which are discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2), that it is vital to consider the extent to which a site is of long-standing ritual or religious significance and therefore may be used by the elite because it embodies the 'power of the past'.

Turner (2006, 63-70) has reflected on the difficulties of using archaeological evidence to enable the identification of important royal residences as opposed to significant religious sites. The excavation of some sites has clearly shown a close physical relationship between a settlement and a probable church, as for example at Charlton, Hampshire, Cowage Farm and Northampton, and indeed

at Cheddar, so clearly secular and religious sites were not necessarily mutually exclusive (Turner 2006, 63-70). These spatial relationships can only be understood by using a combination of historical, archaeological, morphological and topographical evidence. Indeed, it is of note that Blair (2018, 111-31) has recently explored the spatial and topographical relationships between the great hall complexes and settlements such as the Alfredian *burhs* and Roman towns. In doing so Blair (2018, 113) states that he wrongly concluded in 2005 (188-90, 271-5) that there was no 'sustained royal activity in Romano-British walled places'. Rather it is possible to identify established zones embracing 'landscapes of high-status [pagan and Christian] activity' which included, as at Lyminge, Kent: a bronze-age barrow, a pre-Christian ritual complex, sunken-featured buildings, a great hall complex, a possible monastic enclosure and Lyminge minster on land given in either 697 or 712 AD (Blair 2018, 113, 121 figure 34). Lyminge is therefore an excellent example of the longevity of sacred places. It was by acknowledging the long-term importance of sacred places within the landscape and their spatial or topographical relationships with early medieval royal *villae* and churches which enabled the development of the hypothesis addressed by this thesis.

5.1.2   *Relationships between royal villae and early medieval minsters*

The relationship between secular royal power and ecclesiastical power was delicately balanced during the early medieval period. The promulgation of the Gospel and provision of pastoral care was only achievable with royal support. Contrary to this, the Church also needed 'to preserve some degree of physical and devotional privacy' (Morris 1989, 118). Consequently, there is evidence of religious communities being established in the vicinity of royal *villae* but at a sufficient distance away 'to maintain monastic detachment from worldly affairs' (Morris 1989, 118). The seventh-century relationship was 'of proximity rather than absolute contiguity' (Blair 1992, 231) and by the late seventh century minsters were established within their own enclosure about 2-3 miles from their 'twinned' royal *villae*. For example, by the seventh or eighth century minsters had been established beside or close to Ripon, North Yorkshire and Repton,

Derbyshire but Richard Morris (1989, 130-3) makes the point that there is no evidence to suggest that all minsters were established through the same process at the same point in time. The evidence from Hampshire is indicative of a 'system of collegiate mother churches' established by royal policy between 685 and 726 AD which linked these churches with royal *villae* (Hase 1988, 58). In Dorset Theresa Hall (2000, 79) has shown that there was a 'pattern of minster church[es]' serving *parochiae* which were based on large royal or ecclesiastical estates and Turner (2006, 113 see also 118-23) is quite clear 'that there were close relationships between administrative units and major churches' in the South-West. Michael Costen (2011, 58-9) has argued that some of the mid-seventh-century royal estates in Somerset had 'a major religious community at their centre which was under the patronage and control of the king', for example at Cannington. Therefore, these estates should not be regarded as either 'royal' or 'ecclesiastical', but as a mixture of the two. In 2018 Blair (pages 131-2) uses archaeological evidence to review the seventh to eighth century relationship between minsters and royal *villae* and concludes there is evidence of royal complexes being established within the estates of minsters, for example at Cowage Farm. There is also evidence of 'royal halls giving way to ecclesiastical complexes', also at Cowage Farm (Blair 2018, 133).

Much of the archaeological and historical research to date has considered the territorial organisation of the Church rather than relationships between royal *villae* and churches (for example, Bassett 1992b; Pitt 2003; Pickles 2018). It is of note that David Petts (2009, 161-73) in his history of the early Welsh Church makes little mention of the relationships that might have existed between royal estates and churches. Morris is firmly of the opinion that there was no overall strategy to systematically provide churches, and therefore pastoral care, and concludes that the reason there now appears to have been a system was due to 'an administrative net [being thrown] over a disorderly pattern' in the tenth and eleventh centuries (Morris 1989, 133).

Tables 5.2a and 5.2b list the royal *villae* which were initially identified but it should not be assumed that this list is comprehensive. The documentary evidence which was used to identify them is discussed below.

5.2   IDENTIFYING SOMERSET'S ROYAL *VILLAE*

Identifying where royal *villae* were sited, and when they were at the height of their importance in Wessex is extremely difficult to ascertain as few sites have been excavated (Turner 2006a, 61-6; see also Yorke 1995, 76-7). The only site excavated in Somerset is at Cheddar as already discussed. There is no doubt that many royal *villae* in Somerset are absent from the documentary record because, apart from a few references in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and charters, the major source of historical evidence is the comparatively late eleventh-century Domesday Survey.

The survey provides clear evidence that in the eleventh century there were royal *villae* in existence across Somerset. However, the process used to identify the royal *villae* is imprecise and therefore it is likely that the lists in Tables 5.2a and 5.2b are to some degree inaccurate and incomplete. Kingsbury [Regis] for example, is not named in the Domesday Survey and would have been included within the entry for Milborne [Port] (*DB* 1,10). Kingsbury [Regis] is to the north of Milborne Port which is on a southward sloping site with the church on a local highpoint at 83.4 metres. There is a clear relationship between Kingsbury [Regis] (Figure 5.2), which can only be identified as a royal *villa* by its name, and the important church of Milborne Port which has an importance rating of 17 (see Section 4.3). Costen (2011, 165) has described Milborne Port as 'an especially created dependency' to the royal *villa* at Kingsbury probably dating from the late 'Anglo-Saxon' period. Milborne Port parish church is set within a rectilinear street plan around which the town developed (Costen 2011, 165). A similar pattern of development also occurred at Crewkerne, Milverton and Yeovil, see Figure 5.3. However, this shows very clearly that just because the enclosure around a church can be described as rectilinear that description cannot be used as a distinguishing criterion when there is so much variation in enclosure size and layout. In addition, it is important to note the possible rectilinear enclosures around the churches at Ilton and Whitchurch (see Figures 4.5 and 4.6), neither of which have been identified by others as early medieval minsters, therefore whether there is a link between rectilinear layouts and early medieval minsters needs to be reassessed.
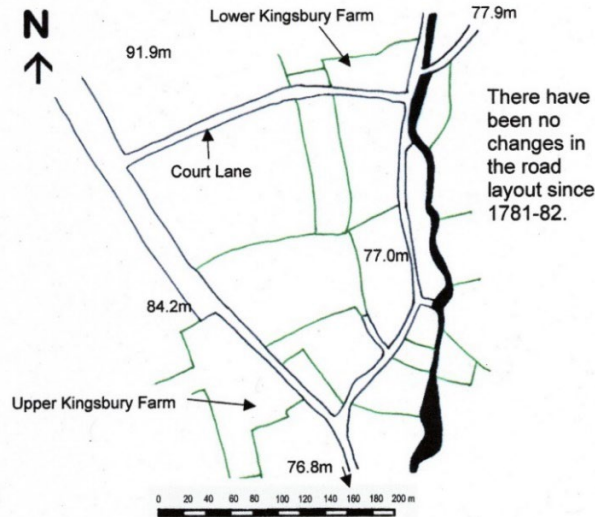
Figure 5.2. *Map showing the postulated site of the* royal *villa at Kingsbury [Regis] to the north of Milborne Port. Map based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision published 1900, Landmark Information Group, UK (downloaded from EDINA, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap), Milborne Port Tithe Map dated c.1840, and a map drawn in 1781-82 (DD/BR/u/32).*
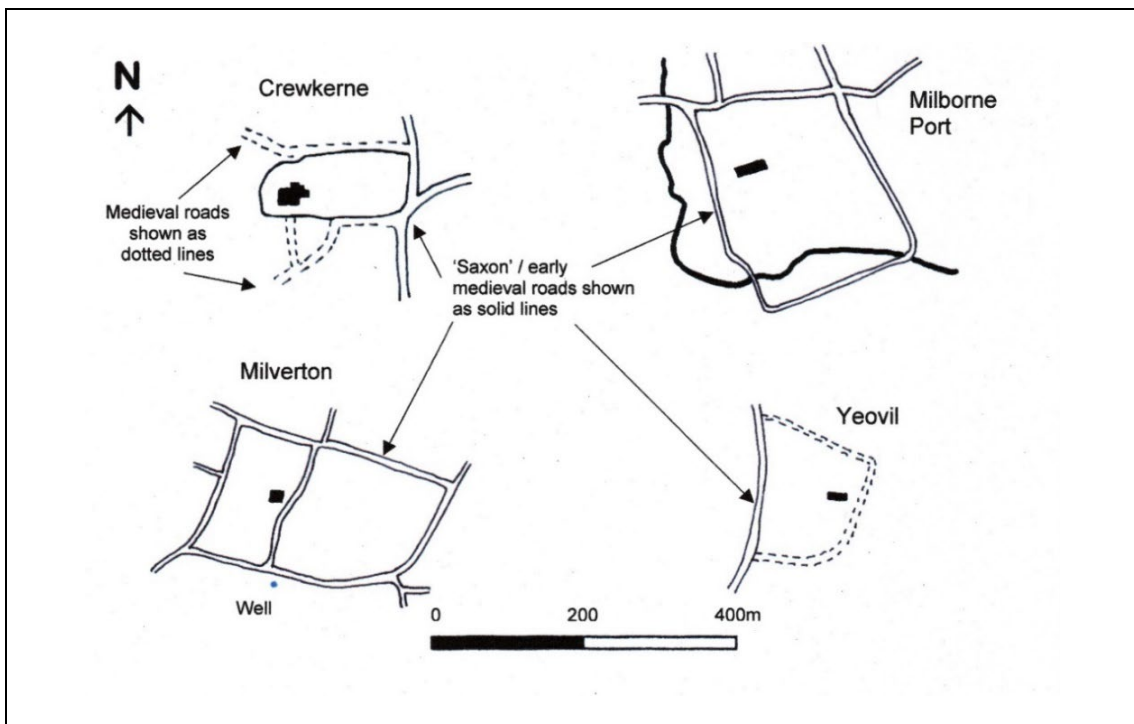
Figure 5.3. *Rectilinear street plans of Crewkerne, Milborne Port, Milverton and Yeovil. Base maps derived from 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision published c.1900, Landmark Information Group, UK (downloaded from EDINA, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap) amended by Somerset Extensive Urban Survey maps (Gathercole 2003d, map B; 2003n, map B; Richardson 2003c, map B; 2003d, map B).*

5.2.1   *Identification of royal villae*

The royal *villae* in Somerset have been identified using a range of evidence including the Domesday Survey and royal events, for example the burial of a king. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the secondary sources which have identified places as royal *villae* and illustrate that there are differences of opinion as to whether particular places were royal centres. Burnham, for example is only identified as such by Turner (2006a) on the basis that it was included as a bequest in King Alfred's will (charter S1507). This is also true of Kilton but in this instance Turner did not identify it as a royal *villa*, perhaps because it is now a very insignificant hamlet. There is though a strong consensus that some places were definitely royal *villae*, for example, Somerton and Cheddar.

To date the evidence used to identify royal *villae* was mainly limited to that derived from documents, for example how places were named, as shown in Table 5.1. To identify more of Somerset's royal *villae* it became clear that it was necessary to use a much wider range of evidence. To achieve this, the Domesday Survey entries for several royal and ecclesiastical manors were compared in detail. Several entries are discussed below to illustrate how it is possible to interpret the survey entries to determine the importance of a royal manor and therefore whether it was the most important royal *villa* within its locality. This process facilitated the identification of a series of criteria which could be used to identify which places should be classified as royal *villae*. These criteria are discussed below and detailed in Tables 5.2a and 5.2b

5.2.2   *Royal estates and burhs: indicators of importance in the eleventh century*

Most of the entries in the Domesday Survey describe manors. These could include several small settlements dispersed across a manor and incorporating tracts of woodland and areas of agricultural land. For example, the entry for Langford [Budville], a royal 'comital' manor within a rural area is given below:

> Godwin son of Harold held it before 1066; it paid tax for 5 hides. Land for 10 ploughs, of which 1 ½ hides are in lordship; 1 plough there; 4 slaves; 21 villagers and 4 smallholders with 8 ploughs & 3 ½ hides. A mill pays 7s 6d;

meadow, 8 acres; pasture, 100 acres; woodland, 30 acres. I cob; 3 cattle; 10 pigs; 30 sheep; 18 goats. It pays £4 12s; when William [the Conquer] acquired it, as much (*DB* 1,16).

The entry refers to 'hides' and this was hypothetically the amount of land required to support one household, but the acreage varied according to the quality of the land. It should therefore be regarded as a unit of taxation rather than measuring a specific area of land.

Other Domesday Survey entries for larger royal manors, such as Milborne Port (*DB* 1,10), include agricultural entries similar to Langford Budville, although the quantities are greater. In the manor of Milborne Port there was, for example, land for 50 ploughs, 170 acres of meadow, 70 villagers and 18 smallholders with 65 ploughs. It was a large manor and would have covered a sizeable geographic area. In addition, to the descriptions of the large rural areas of the manor the entry for Milborne Port describes two boroughs:

In this manor [Milborne Port] 56 burgesses who pay 60s with the market. In Ilchester 107 burgesses who pay 20s. The market with its dependencies pays £11 into the king's revenue (*DB* 1,10).

Domesday boroughs were established within 'royal and comital estates with extensive administrative functions throughout the shire' (Roffe 2007, 125) and are regarded as being urban, rather than rural settlements (Erskine and Williams 2003, 259). The burgesses referred to above in the survey entry for Milborne Port lived in the *burh* or town and would have been comparatively wealthy and paid a monetary rent (Erskine and Williams 2003, 259) rather than rent paid for by labour or in kind. The population living within the *burh* of Milborne Port would have included people in addition to the burgesses as shown by an entry for Langport included within the entry for North Curry:

5 burgesses in Langport who pay 38d; 18 slaves; 4 pigmen; 2 cottagers (*DB* 1,19).

Milborne Port was a town with church, a market and burgesses (*DB* 1,10), but it is important to note that the population recorded in the Domesday Survey does not represent the total population as Weldon Finn and Wheatley have stated, and it is impossible to say whether the quoted population figures are correct (Weldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 161). The Domesday population figures have therefore only been used for comparative purposes.

The king held Milborne Port church with 1 hide in both 1066 and 1086 (*DB* 1,10); after 1066 it was sublet to Reinbald the priest. Within the survey entry for Somerton (*DB* 1,1) it is stated that 34 burgesses lived in the town of Langport; it is unclear whether this included the 5 burgesses mentioned above. There is no mention of a church at Langport (Figure 5.4) and the earliest fabric in the current building is a late Norman (*c.*1190-1200) decorated lintel above the south doorway (Som. HER No. 54133).

Figure 5.4.   *The view from St Mary's church, Langport looking south across the low-lying wetlands of the Somerset Levels through which runs the river Parrett (author's photo).*

The entry for Ilchester is rather different from that of Milborne Port in that all the references to it refer only to the *burh* or town and its burgesses (*DB* 1,10; 1,31; 24,17). In addition, there are two entries referring to St Andrew's church at Northover (*DB* 8,37; 15,1) which is just outside Ilchester. These describe the church as having 3 hides of land and a mill. Northover church was held by Glastonbury Abbey in 1066, but in 1086 it was part of the king's estate and held by Bishop Maurice of London (Thorn and Thorn 1980, 394). This is therefore another example of the king taking back control of a church after the Conquest.

During the eleventh century the administrative, economic and military functions of the state were increasingly centralised within towns which consequently became more important than the rural royal *villae* which they replaced (Baxter 2007, 97). Welldon Finn and Wheatley (1967, 196-205) use references in the Domesday Survey to the payment of the 'third penny' to the earl as an indicator of urban or borough status in the eleventh century, for example at Axbridge, Langport and Milborne Port. The 'third penny' refers to a third of the dues payable by the *burh*; the other two pennies being payable to the king (Erskine and Williams 2003, 264). It has been shown that 'earls had some sort of presence in nearly sixty towns' in England (Baxter 2007, 98) because they were the recipients of the 'third penny', which

> was intended to give earls an incentive to ensure the collection of royal revenue derived from towns, trade and the profits of justice (Baxter 2007, 142).

This is thought to refer to a 'much earlier system of royal patronage' (Baxter 2007, 142). It is important to note that Old Cleeve is not identified by Welldon Finn and Wheatley (1967, 197) as having urban status, but prior to 1066 it had received 'borough right' payments from Cannington, Carhampton, North Petherton and Williton (*DB* 1,3; 6; 13). These payments equated to the earl receiving 'third penny' payments (Baxter 2007, 96). The implication is therefore that within the pre-Conquest manors of Cannington, Carhampton, North Petherton and Williton there was a *burh* or *burhs*. The earl in receiving the 'third penny' payment from them was therefore being encouraged to develop these *burhs* as towns. Watchet is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey but was within the manor of Williton. It was an Alfredian *burh* on the north coast of Somerset and included a mint (*c.*979-1154) which was functioning in *c.*1083-1086 (Costen 2011, 165; see also Blackburn 1974). Watchet has a natural harbour and was a trading centre (Costen 2011, 165); it is therefore probable that it was Watchet paying the 'third penny' to the earl (Aston 1984, 192-3). There are no indications that Old Cleeve was ever more than a rural settlement but does the fact that it received 'borough right' payments indicate that it was a royal *villa*? It is of note that the church at Old Cleeve has been identified as being on a post-Roman site and that in *c.*1334 the settlement paid the large Lay

Subsidy tax of £30-75 (Letters, 2010), a similar sum to other places which had been royal *villa*.

The Domesday Survey entries for North Petherton (*DB* 1,3; 16,7) give no indication that it was other than a rural manor except that it paid the 'borough right' and there was a church within the manor. However, by 1334 it had developed as an urban settlement and was paying £30 in the Lay Subsidy tax return; in contrast Watchet was paying £11 17s (Letters, 2010). It should be noted that the payment of the 'third penny' of the 'borough right' for Watchet and North Petherton is described in the past tense in the Domesday Survey (*DB* 1,13). This is an indication that some planned late 'Anglo-Saxon' towns had failed to develop into urban communities by 1086, because Axbridge, Bruton, Ilchester, Langport and Milborne Port are described in the survey as paying the 'third penny' to William of Mohun in the present tense (*DB* 1,31). It is of note that all these towns were paying £20 or more in the Lay Subsidy tax return of 1334 and in the case of Bruton it was £95 (Letters, 2010).

5.2.3   *Royal estates and customary dues or renders: indicators of importance in the eleventh century*

The Domesday Survey details two specific types of customary dues or renders to royal manors. The first are 'night's revenue' payments to the king from royal manors, which equated to the provision of food and other supplies to support the king and his retinue for 24 hours during their peripatetic journeys. By the time the survey was compiled these provisions had been commuted to a payment which is stated in the survey. The second type were payments in kind such as sheep or a bloom of iron and are described as being payable to the royal manor from a nearby manor.

The Domesday Survey entries for Cornwall and Devon include references to customary dues being paid. In Cornwall all the customary dues were payable to named churches such as St Petrock (Ravenhall 1967, 341-2), rather than to a royal estate, which probably indicates the long-standing importance of these churches. In Devon some of the customary dues had been commuted to a payment, but by 1086 many were not being paid to the Crown (Welldon Finn

1967, 290). In the survey entries for Dorset the only mention of customary dues were those payable to Crewkerne from Seaborough, which is now in Dorset, but was listed in the Domesday Survey as being in Somerset (Darby 1967, 125 fn.1, 126).

It was demonstrated that in Dorset there was a correlation between minsters and places held by the royal family that paid the 'night's revenue' to the king (Hall 2000, 79). Patrick Hase (1988, 46) has also linked the payment of 'night's revenue' with royal estates that were not gelded (taxed) in his discussion of Titchfield, Hampshire (see Lavelle 2007, 22-6 for a discussion on how the information about the 'night's revenue' was recorded).

References to customary dues in the Somerset Domesday Survey are only made with reference to royal estates west of the river Parrett (see Tables 5.2a and 5.2b), these were Carhampton, Crewkerne, Curry Rivel, Dulverton and South Petherton. By 1086 all the payments of customary dues or renders to royal manors in Somerset seem to have lapsed or been withheld (Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 210). The manors paying the 'night's revenue' in Somerset were; jointly Cannington, Carhampton and Williton, and also Bruton, Cheddar, Curry Rivel, Frome, Milborne Port, North Petherton, Somerton and South Petherton, and probably Bedminster (Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 170). It is notable that the manors of Crewkerne and Dulverton received customary dues but did not pay the 'night's revenue', this may be an indication that the importance of these manors was not as long-standing as, for example, that of Carhampton.

Other indicators of importance are also listed in Tables 5.2a and Table 5.2b. These include whether a manor hosted a Wessex or Mercian *witan* (or council), or another royal event took place there, whether the king granted charters there, and whether that place was named in King Alfred's will (charter S1507).

5.2.4   *'Comital manors': indicators of importance in the eleventh century*

The payment of the 'third penny' to the earl from a *burh* or a planned *burh* has already been discussed above. It is thought that some manors which were held

by earls pre-Conquest were 'ancient centres of authority or royal centres at earlier dates' (Baxter 2007, 142). It is known that some of these manors were held by the earl's predecessor and therefore the implication is that these manors, known as 'comital manors', were set aside for the earls (Baxter 2007, 141). Indeed, all the 'comital manors' of Somerset passed into King William's hands by forfeiture from the House of Godwin and not from King Edward (Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 168 fn.3). For example, the 'comital manor' of Langford Budville was held by Godwin, son of Harold in 1066 (*DB*1,16), while Capton (within the later parish of Stogumber) was held by Earl Harold (*DB* 1,15). The 'comital manors' of Somerset were: Capton, Congresbury, Creech St Michael, Crewkerne, Dulverton, Langford Budville, Henstridge, North Curry, Old Cleeve, and Queen Camel. It is notable that many of these manors adjoin another royal manor, for example Dulverton is next to Kingsbrompton [Brompton Regis] and Henstridge is next to Milborne Port.

The values of these 'comital manors' are entered in the Domesday Survey as 'renders' and not as values, the amounts of white silver being tested by assay. The exception to this is Langford Budville (*DB* 1,16; Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 168-9). Other manors also paid by render, for example, Winsford paid £10 10s of white silver (*DB* 1,17). It is of note that Winsford was held by Earl Tosti [*sic*; this was Earl Tostig, brother of Harold Godwinson] before 1066 and it has been proposed that it too may have been a 'comital manor' (Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 169). Kingsbrompton (*DB* 1,11) and Coker (*DB* 1,23) held by Countess Gytha, Hardington Mandeville (*DB* 1,24) held by Gunhilda, daughter of Earl Godwin, and Nettlecombe (*DB* 1,14) held by Godwin, son of Harold, are also likely to have been 'comital manors' (Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 169). These manors all paid in white silver and were held by members of the Godwin family in 1066. These four possible 'comital' manors have been assessed, and based on the evidence in the Domesday Survey, they have all been identified as royal *villae* (see Table 5.3).

All the above 'comital' or possible 'comital manors' were held by the king in 1086 and not an earl. The evidence suggests that the 'comital manors' were assigned to earls 'by the king on an 'ex officio' basis [or loaned], for as long as

they held office' (Baxter 2007, 150, see also 145-51). Given that payments by these manors to the king were made in white silver, rather than coinage, it could be construed that the 'loaning' of these manors to earls while they held office was a long-standing practice.

Table 5.3. Possible additional 'comital' manors in Somerset

Place	1066 landholder	Taxation / hidage / ploughlands	Possible royal *villa*
Coker [East & West]	Countess Gytha	Paid tax for 7 of the 15 hides; pays £19 12s. of white silver & as much when William the sheriff acquired it. **Land for 15 ploughs** (*DB* 1,23).	YES
Hardington Mandeville	Gunhilda, daughter of Earl Godwin	Paid tax for 5 hides, 10 hides there; pays £12 14s of white silver now & when William the Sheriff acquired it. **Land for 10 ploughs** (*DB* 1,24).	YES
Nettlecombe	Godwin son of Harold King	Paid tax for 2 hides & 3 virgates; it **pays 12s of silver** now & when William acquired it. **Land for 12 ploughs** (*DB* 1,14). Before 1066 3 virgates held with Exton in 1086 lay in Nettlecombe manor; value now & when the bishop acquired them 15s. **No land for ploughs stated** (*DB* 5,5).	YES
Winsford	Earl Tosti [= Tostig, brother of Harold Godwinson (Thorn & Thorne 1980, 296 note 1,17]	Paid tax for 3 1/2 hides; **pays £10 10s of silver**; when William acquired it as much. To this manor 1/2 hide has been added, three thanes held it before 1066 & served the reeve of the manor as a customary due without giving any revenue, pays 20s into the king's revenue; when William of Mohun acquired it, as much. **Land for 60 ploughs** (*DB* 1,17). Robert of Auberville [king's servant] holds 1/2 hide in Withypool (*DB* 46,3).	YES

5.2.5   *Other payments by royal manors*: *indicators of importance in the eleventh century*

The most important royal manors also paid using a distinctive method of payment, for example Somerton (*DB* 1,1) paid £79 10s 7d a year at 20d (pence) to the *ora.* An *ora* was a unit of account equating to 1/8th of a mark 'usually reckoned as equivalent to 20d' (Erskine and Williams 2003, 263) and is a unit of weight likely to equate to an 'Anglo-Saxon' ounce 'of 20 pennyweights' (Grierson 2003, 112). These payments provide

> a glimpse of an archaic system, which had almost disappeared, in the valuations of the twelve manors which comprised the Ancient Demesne of the Crown (Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 170).

The twelve manors paying at 20d to the *ora* were: Bedminster, Bruton, Cannington, Carhampton, Cheddar, Curry Rivel, Frome, Milborne Port, North Petherton, Somerton and South Petherton and Williton.

5.2.6   *Estates not paying geld: indicators of importance in the eleventh century*

The twelve manors listed above according to the Domesday Survey 'never paid tax [geld]' and were not hidated; therefore, the number of hides within each manor was not stated in the survey. All these manors paid, or in the case of Bedminster probably paid, the 'night's farm', as these payments were remnants of an 'archaic system' and as the manors were not hidated, this has been interpreted as meaning that they were not rated for tribute and therefore likely to have been long-term possessions of the kings of Wessex since the mid-seventh century (Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 170; Costen 2011, 64; see also Hase 1988, 46). In addition to the twelve manors comprising the 'Ancient Demesne' of the Crown there were another eight which did not pay geld.

5.2.7   *Differences between land taxed and land held*

There is a discrepancy, sometimes quite large, between the amount of land which was taxed in a manor, and the amount of land stated to be in a manor or the amount available to be ploughed. For example, Chewton Mendip only paid tax on 14 hides out of a total of 29 (*DB* 1,29) and there was land for 40 ploughs. There were fourteen estates which paid a substantially reduced geld in this way and it is unclear why this was the case, but Welldon Finn and Wheatley (1967, 151-3) suggest an explanation for discrepancies between land taxed and land held:

> A reasonable assumption seems to be that they represent land brought into cultivation, or added to a manor, since the time when its assessment had been made or last revised. An alternative explanation is that the owners were trying to account for land the hidage [or number of hides] of which did not tally with that of their charters (Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 152-3).

The other, perhaps more likely, explanation is that these discrepancies are also indicative of the 'archaic' tribute system that once existed, as in the case of the manors paying the 'night's farm'. Therefore, where there is a substantial

discrepancy between the land held and the tax paid this was assumed to indicate the manors had previously paid tribute and were therefore important central places within their locality.

5.2.8 *Ploughlands*

David Roffe (2007, 203-9) has argued that ploughland was 'a non-fiscal measure of fiscal land' or a 'measure of the capacity of the hidated land to pay the geld assessed upon it'.

> Where ploughland matches hide there was a balance between field and fiscal units, while an excess indicated a surplus of land for the geld assessed upon it. Conversely, a deficit indicated over-taxation (Roffe 2007, 207).

In Costen's (2011, 128-9) view the number of ploughlands reflected the quality of the soil and therefore that the number of ploughlands reflected the productivity of the land. Roffe (2007, 207) takes the view that the number of ploughlands should be estimated from the number of ploughs used to work the land and concludes that the ploughland figures seem to have been used by the king to renegotiate the tax payable by a manor because of ploughs working unhidated, and therefore untaxed, land (Roffe 2007, 208-9).

There are several places where the number of ploughlands is in excess of the number of hides, sometimes to a significant extent. For example, Kingsbrompton paid tax on a total of 10 hides and yet there was land for 60 ploughs (*DB* 1,11), or Wedmore paid tax on 10 out of 11 hides held and paid £12, yet there was land for 36 ploughs (*DB* 1,2; 6,15). Should these examples be interpreted as an under assessment for tax, as when Martock, for example only paid tax on 13 hides out of a total of 38 (*DB* 1,27)? It is important to note that there are places not held by the royal family where this is also the case. For example, Wiveliscombe held by the Bishop of Wells, paid tax for 15 hides but there was land for 36 ploughs (*DB* 6,6); or Brushford held by the Count of Mortain paid tax for 2 hides but there was land for 12 ploughs (*DB* 19,16). This surely is an indication that previously Brushford was held by the crown and therefore would have been within the royal manor of Dulverton to which it is

adjacent (see the parish marked BR on Figure 5.1). This would explain why, before 1066, Brushford paid a customary due to Dulverton.

5.2.9 *Mapping the evidence for important* royal *estates*

When the evidence used to identify important royal estates is considered it is clear there are differences across the county (Figure 5.1; see Tables 5.2a and 5.2b; see also Lomas 2009, 104-31; 2012). There are places across Somerset paying a 'night's revenue', but as already stated it is only west of the river Parrett that the Domesday Survey mentions the payment of customary dues and it is only east of the river that there is recorded evidence of *witans* or other royal events being held. The only evidence of 'borough right' payments to be found in the survey are for Old Cleeve and Taunton, both west of the river Parrett. The implication is therefore that political control at some point was probably different either side of the Parrett because there are these differences (Lomas 2009, 112-3).

There are also differences between the northern area of the county, drawing a line across from the mouth of the river Parrett (near Burnham) to Frome, and the rest of the county. In this northern area it is only Congresbury that paid its taxes in white silver and only Cheddar and Frome paid tax at 20d to the *ora*. It is also only Cheddar and Frome in the northern area which paid the 'night's revenue and the 'third penny'. It is though possible that Bedminster, in the north-east of the county, also paid the 'night's revenue' (Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 170-1). Similarly, Congresbury is the only 'comital' manor in the northern half of the county whereas in the southern half there are eight. It is also the only 'comital manor' which did not either pay reduced tax, or no tax, or is adjacent to a place that did not have to pay its taxes in full. The extent to which the geographical spread of the evidence is relevant to the relationships between major churches and the royal *villae* was, at this stage in the research, still to be determined.

5.2.10 *Place-name evidence*

Whether evidence derived from place-names can provide confirmation that a particular place was a royal *villa* was also considered. Costen (2011, 64-5) is quite clear that there are patterns to be discerned in the names of places held by the king in Somerset. One group of such names refer to a topographical feature plus '*tūn*', which has a variety of meanings from enclosure to farmstead to settlement (Watts 2004, xlviii; Costen 2011, 64). For example, Bruton is the '*tūn*' on the river Brue and Taunton is the '*tūn*' on the river Tone. The use of the appellation '*tūn*' can be dated to before 730 AD, but mainly it seems to date from the period when the early great estates were fragmenting into smaller units (Watts 2004, xlviii). It is important not to assume that places with '*tūn*' as an appendage all relate to royal sites because there is no 'category of place-name or [place-name] element' which is peculiar to royal sites (Blair 2005, 276).

The second group of names associated with Somerset royal *villae* are those which consist solely of a river name, these are considered to be of long-standing, for example, Curry and Doulting (Gelling 1984, 10; Costen 2011, 65). Another group of names which is of note is that which include 'king', for example Kingsbury above Milborne Port. The significance of these names varies, but in the case of Kingsbury the meaning almost certainly means 'king's fortified place'. The uncertainty is due to this place-name not being discussed by Watts (2004) and it is not included in the online database managed by the Institute for Name Studies. However, even when the derivation of a place-name is such that it is indicative of it possibly being a royal *villa* without other evidence this cannot be assumed. For example, Ilton is derived from the river Isle and '*tūn*' which is indicative that Ilton was a royal *villa*. There is, however, no other indicative evidence that Ilton may have been significant in the early medieval period except that its position is on a raised site (see Figure 4.5); the importance of Ilton is discussed further in Chapter 7 (Section 7.3.1).

Place-names that refer to other topographical features are also believed to be early and Gelling (1984, 6) explores the debate that led to this conclusion. In Somerset there are pre-Conquest royal estates with names derived from topographical features, for example Crewkerne where the first element in the

name is '*crǖg*' which means a hill, mound or tumulus, and indeed Crewkerne is sited near Bincombe Hill (Institute of Name Studies database). '*Crǖg*' is derived from Primitive Welsh, and therefore predates the takeover of the South-West by Wessex (Institute for Name Studies database), while '*aerne*' was added as it is Old English for a building. Sometimes place-names derived from a topographical feature also have '*tūn*' added to them for example, Carhampton the definition of which is 'farm or settlement at the rocks' (Institute of Name Studies database; Aston 1985, 34; Costen 2011, 65).

Some place-names are not derived from either river names or topographical features, for example the royal estate of Somerton which means 'summer farm or settlement' (Institute of Name Studies database; Costen 2011, 65) and has been interpreted as a reference to transhumance. This view has though been challenged as it could be interpreted as the '*tūn*' from which the summer grazing is managed (Costen 2011, 114; Thorn 2012, 166). In Somerset there are three place-names which include the term 'minster'. Bedminster and Pitminster which link 'minster' with an OE [Old English] personal name (Institute of Name Studies database; Costen 2011, 65), whereas the first element in Ilminster is derived from the river Isle. However, place-names which include the 'minster' element may not be so called because the church within the settlement was an early medieval minster as the term 'minster' was increasingly used to denote a church of any status (Pearce 2004, 178).

Another key place-name element is the OE *burh* which means 'a dwelling or dwellings within a fortified enclosure' (Watts 2004, xlii). The term *burh* was used in conjunction with 'prehistoric and Roman antiquities to 'Anglo-Saxon' fortifications' which included fortified manor houses or defended towns (Watts 2004, xlii). Examples in Somerset range from Congresbury to Glastonbury to Kingsbury Episcopi, but 'bury' has also been used in minor names such as 'Behind Berry' in Somerton, a road which runs to one side of the town, or 'Eastbury' to the east of Carhampton church. Secular sites were defended by a ditch and bank, as still exists around Wareham, Dorset for example, but so were religious sites, for example Ilton (Ellison 1983, 43), it is therefore likely that sometimes the term '*burh'* was used in relation to a religious site. A possible

Somerset example is Congresbury which is close to an Iron-Age defended site or 'bury' on which a pagan or post-Roman shrine might have existed (Pearce 2004, 178; Historic England Monument No. 195114).

Several place-names begin with Stoke or Stog (derived from '*stoc*'), for example North Stoke, Stogursey or Stogumber, which reflects that the place was a 'secondary settlement, or an outlying farmstead, [or] a dairy farm' (Watts 2004, 577). Before Watt's published his seminal work on place-names it was thought that place-names derived from '*stoc*' could reflect that they were religious sites (Smith 1970, 153-4; see also Costen 2011, 60). The two definitions are not mutually exclusive if the settlement was an outlying monastic cell or hermitage, and therefore a secondary settlement to a monastery. This may be true of Kewstoke for example, the name of which is derived from St Kew an early Cornish saint + '*stoc*' (Watts 2004, 343; see also Calder 2004, 13-4). However, although the place is named as '*Kiustok*' in 1274 in 1265 it was named as 'Stoke super Mare' (Watts 2004, 343).

As Table 5.4 shows the derivations of place-names associated with royal *villae* in Somerset vary and there is no clear pattern to how places were named, although many of the names are derived from rivers or other topographical features there are some which are not, notably Bath and Glastonbury. It is therefore only possible to use place-names as collaborative, not definitive, evidence that a place was a royal *villa*.

5.2.11 *Somerset's royal villae*

Tables 5.2a and 5.2b include all the evidence discussed above which were used to reach an opinion as to which places in Somerset should initially be classified as royal *villae*. Given that some of the evidence used is based on archaic systems, for example the night's revenue payment, when places functioned as royal *villae* cannot be determined. The evidence derived from the Domesday Survey is clearly different each side of the river Parrett and there are differences between the north-east and the rest of the county. To understand how relationships between royal *villae* and minsters can be identified the area around Yatton will be considered in detail.

Table 5.4   *Identification of* royal *villae: place-name evidence*
(Watts 2004; Institute for Name Studies database for place-names
https://halogen.le.ac.uk/query/kepn).

Place	Derivation of place-name
Bath	Usage as in bathing place
Bedminster	OE[1] personal name + minster
Bruton	R[2] + '*tūn*'
Burnham	T[3] = unknown stream + land hemmed in by water or marsh; a river-meadow - all these apply to Burnham which is by mouth of river Parrett between the sea & The Levels
Cannington	T + '*tūn*'
Capton (within 19thC parish of Stogumber) ['comital manor']	Not yet analysed but note Stogumber = 'Gunner's/ Gumer's/Guntmar outlying farm/ settlement'
Carhampton	T + '*tūn*'
Cheddar [inc. manor of Wedmore at *DB*]	T but a choice of explanations
Chewton Mendip	R + T + '*tūn*'
Coker [East & West] [possible 'comital manor']	Stream name + directional after *DB*
Congresbury ['comital manor']	Early saint + '*burh*'
Crewkerne ['comital manor']	T
Curry Rivel	R or stream name + Norman personal name
Dulverton ['comital manor']	? T as in 'hidden ford' + '*tūn*'; Dulverton is in a valley close to river Barle
Frome Selwood	R
Glastonbury	Tribal name + 'burh'
Hardington Mandeville [possible 'comital manor']	OE personal name + '*tūn*' + Norman personal name
Henstridge ['comital manor']	T
Keynsham	OE personal name + T
Kingsbrompton	T + '*tūn*'
Kingsbury [Milborne Port later town]	Kingsbury = Royal ownership + '*burh*' Milbourne = mill + stream.
Kingsbury Episcopi	Royal ownership + '*burh*' + episcopal ownership
North Curry ['comital manor']	Unknown R + direction
North Petherton	R + '*tūn*' + directional
Old Cleeve ['comital manor']	T as in place at cliff or steep slope - church is on promontory site
Pennard [incl. East & West at *DB*]	T + post-Conquest directional
Pilton	T + '*tūn*'
Queen Camel ['comital manor']	T as in 'bare hill' or Camel Hill + royal ownership after *DB*
Somerton	OE 'summer farm/settlement'
South Petherton	R + '*tūn*' + directional
Taunton	R + '*tūn*'
Wedmore [within manor of Cheddar in 1066]	Unclear - possibly usage as in 'hunting moor'
Williton [19thC parish St Decumans]	R + '*tūn*'
KEY: 1. OE = Old English 2. R = river 3. T = topographical	

5.3   CASE STUDY: YATTON

There is no doubt that Yatton was a pre-eminent church because its importance rating is 13 despite only meeting two of the minster criteria (Appendix 8). The indications are that it can therefore be described as an early medieval minster. Whether it was also a royal *villa* will now be considered.

Yatton is in the north of the county and lies between the rivers Yeo and Blind Yeo and is on a ridge of land between 10-13 metres above sea level. The low-lying land which lies between Yatton and the coast and to the east and west of it is generally well below the 10 metres contour line (see Figure 5.5). To the south of Yatton is the end of the Mendip hills which rise to 186 metres on Winterhead Hill (ST437 568). The area around Yatton is therefore defined by the landscape and is within a topographically defined land unit although it is unclear whether it formed an early estate. Why this is of relevance to the identification of Yatton's *parochia* will be considered in Chapter 6.

Congresbury is physically quite close to Yatton although the church, and presumably the initial settlement, was on the other side of the river Yeo. Identifying the area around Yatton was difficult to assess as it may have been linked to Congresbury via a river crossing, and therefore to its chapelry of Week [Wick] St Lawrence (Costen 2011, 62). In defining the area around Yatton cognisance was taken of Somerset's medieval deanery boundaries (see Table 5.5) because there is evidence that deanery boundaries show a 'great coincidence between secular and religious units' in Somerset (Thorn 2012, 180) and can be used to identify pre-Conquest boundaries. The geographical relationship between Somerset's early great estates and the deaneries is discussed in Chapter 6.

Within the area being considered there are three nineteenth-century parishes (Kain and Oliver 1995) Kenn (acreage 1018) Kingston Seymour (acreage 3422) and Yatton (acreage 6392) which currently has a large church (Figure 5.6). There is collaborative evidence that Yatton may have been a royal *villa* based on its name. The derivation of Yatton is from OE 'ēa' meaning river and '*tūn*' meaning an enclosure, farmstead, village or estate (Institute for Name

Studies database). The place-name derivation of Kingston Seymour is 'King's farm or settlement' plus a Norman personal name (Institute for Name Studies database). There is good evidence that 'Kingston' names are usually found 'very close' to a royal *villa*, although the relevance of the name in each case is difficult to assess. Therefore each 'Kingston' place needs to be considered 'within the local patterns of landscape organisation' (Probert 2008, 18).
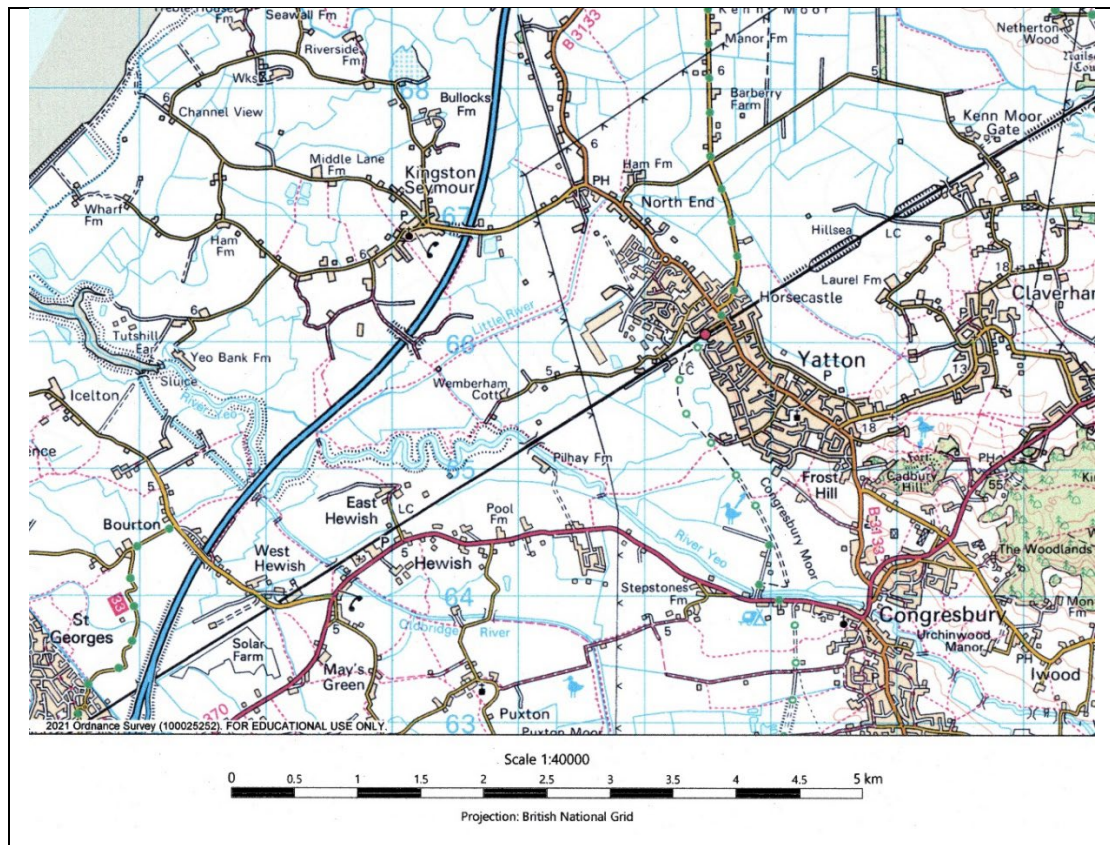
Figure 5.5.   *Map showing how Yatton is sited on a spur of land amid a large area of low-lying wetlands. Map scale 1:40,000 Ordnance Survey, Current Online Edition, Landmark Information Group, UK downloaded [January 2021] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).*

It is significant that Kingston Seymour was only taxed on 2 out of 5 ½ hides pre-Conquest and that there was land for 24 ploughs (DB 5,63-4). These differentials between land taxed and land held could, as discussed earlier, indicate that Kingston Seymour had in the past been a significant royal holding. Despite this, by 1066 it was held by Aldred and four thanes (DB 5,63-4).

Figure 5.6. *Picture of St Mary's church at Yatton showing the south side of the crossing tower. It is a large, impressive church, clearly still important in the thirteenth-century when much of it was built (author's photo).*

Yatton which was identified as a possible royal *villa,* based on the derivation of its name, paid tax on the 20 hides it held (DB 6,14). It is stated to have land for 22 ploughs which is not so different from the number of hides on which it paid tax (see Table 5.5).Therefore, based on the evidence in the Domesday Survey it is more likely that the royal *villa* was at Kingston Seymour and the 1st Edition OS map shows that it is sited on the north-western end of the spur of land on which Yatton is sited. The evidence is far from conclusive as there is no mention of how the payments for Kingston Seymour were made, for example by white silver or as a render. The survey states that Yatton was held in 1066 by 'John the Dane' (*DB* 6,14), but in 1086 it was held by the bishop of Wells. Unfortunately, there is no information as to when the bishop was granted Yatton. The total population listed in the Domesday Survey for Kingston Seymour was 40, which is not so different from the 44 listed for Yatton.

The most significant information in the Domesday Survey entry for Yatton is that:

> Benzelin the Archdeacon holds this manor's church with 1 hide from the bishop; value 20s (*DB* 6,14).

In March 1136 a statute was signed in Westminster to establish the prebendal system which would support Wells cathedral (Bath *Acta* 1061-1205 No. 46; see *Fasti* 7, xxi-ix). One of the churches which was included in the statute was Yatton. In 1291 the church was valued at £30, while that at Kingston Seymour was valued at £13 6s 8d. The question that needs to be asked therefore is whether Yatton was an early medieval minster? It was not held by either the royal family or apparently the Church in 1066, although it was held by the bishop of Wells in 1086. Yatton church did have:

- a nineteenth-century parish in excess of 5,000 acres; and

- a *c.*1291 *Taxatio* value in excess of £20; in addition

- it was a prebend which frequently indicates that a church had been an early medieval minster (Blair 2005, 363-7).

Yatton church has a large awkwardly shaped flattish churchyard which is raised (13.25 metres above sea-level) in comparison to the surrounding area (10-11 metres above sea-level). The existing church is large and imposing, much of it dating from the thirteenth century (Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 731-3). Figure 5.7 shows a curvilinear bend in the road which begins by running north-east past Court Farm and then turns to run south-east before turning slightly northwards past the church. The bend in the road is so sharp that clearly it was following a boundary which may originally have gone around an earlier church site. It would therefore seem possible that the existing building is not sited in the same position as an earlier church. The settlement of Yatton in the nineteenth century was mainly along what is now the B3139 road on a narrow strip of land which is higher than the surrounding wetlands which are 6 metres or less above sea-level. The relationship between a narrow-settled strip of land running through wetlands and a church on higher land is reminiscent of the causeway and church at Langport (see Figure 5.4).
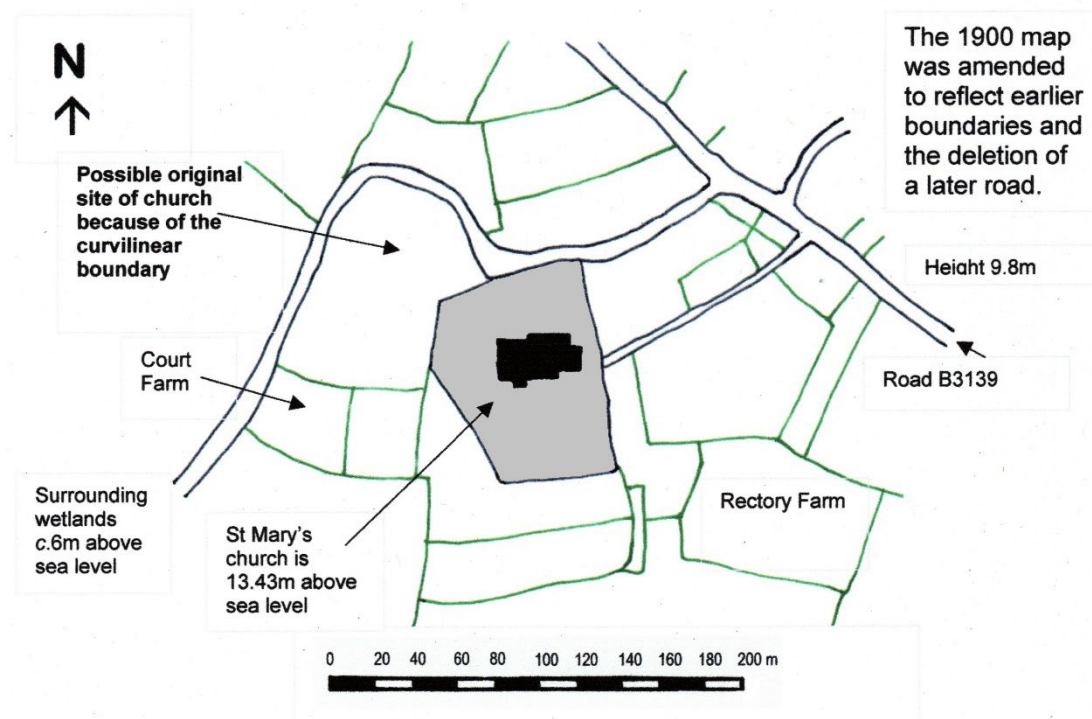
Figure 5.7.   *Map showing the settlement morphology around St Mary's church at Yatton and the possible site of an earlier church. Map based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1900, Landmark Information Group, UK (downloaded from <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap), Yatton Tithe Map dated c.1843, and a map drawn in c.1800 (DD/SAS/C212/MAP/167).*

In this relatively small area of land of just under 10,000 acres it is quite clear that Yatton was the important church, and that Kingston Seymour church was less important; however, it was still valued in the *Taxatio* at more than £13. This difference in pre-eminence is confirmed in the importance rating of each with Yatton at 13 and Kingston Seymour at 9. In 1066 the two places were recorded as having similar populations, but it was Kingston Seymour which had considerably more land that was not taxed. Whether Yatton was a royal *villa* and/or a minster is difficult to assess on the limited evidence, and similarly how important was Kingston Seymour? The main difficulty is the lack of pre-Conquest written evidence and that the Domesday Survey evidence suggests that both places had already lost significance. This is because in 1066 neither was held by the royal family or the Church. It is of note that Yatton, and indeed nearby Congresbury, paid less than £1 each in the 1334 Lay Subsidy return (Scrase 2005, 58) and therefore they were insignificant as settlements in the fourteenth century.

Table 5.5. *Yatton and Kingston Seymour: evidence of importance*

DB place	Total no. of hides & virgates taxed + value	Total land for ploughs	Total DB population	Owner in 1066 or earlier royal grant	c.1291 *Taxatio* value of church	Church prebend	Mother-church to 3+ chapels	19th-century parish acreage
REDCLIFFE DEANERY								
Kingston Seymour	5 ½ Pre-1066 only taxed on 2 hides £6 + 60s	24	27 villagers 12 smallholders 1 slave	Lay	£13 6s 8d	-	-	3422
WELLS DEANERY but geographically would be within Redcliff Deanery								
Yatton had *DB* church + Claverham + Kenn (14th- or 16th-century chapel to Yatton) + Cleeve (not in *DB*; 16th-century chapel to Yatton)	22 ½ + church 1 hide £6 + 25s + church 20s	25	13 villagers 26 smallholders 5 slaves	? Lay or bishop of Wells Gunhilda held Claverham	£30	Wells prebend	YES	5374 + 1018

Less than 1.5 kilometres from Yatton church to the south is the Henley Wood cemetery (Watts and Leach 1996). It is described by Historic England as:

> A Romano-British temple and Saxon inhumation cemetery recorded during excavations in Henley Wood between 1962-64. The temple dates from the third to the late 4th century and is overlain by the Saxon cemetery. The cemetery comprises 73 inhumations, most were supine extended and orientated west-east. A few were orientated north-south. No grave goods were recorded but there were possible examples of timber grave linings or coffins. Radio-carbon dating indicates the cemetery was in use during the fifth-seventh century (Historic England Monument No. [Hob Uid.] 194995).

It seems likely that there was a relationship between the siting of Yatton church and this post-Roman and early medieval religious site. The indications are therefore that Yatton was an important early church and the evidence from the *c.*1291 *Taxatio* confirms that it continued to be important. The valuation of Yatton church was £30 and although administratively it was in the Wells Deanery, geographically it would have been in the Redcliff Deanery. Comparing Yatton with the parishes in the large Redcliff Deanery Yatton had the third

highest valuation behind Bedminster valued at £52 and Keynsham valued at £38 6s 8d. Wraxall was valued at £21 6s 8d but most of the other churches were valued at less than £10. In summary, within the area around Yatton there is a pre-eminent church, a royal site, and a post-Roman and early medieval religious site. To understand the spatial relationships between these sites it is crucial to understand the topography of each site and how they relate to the overall landscape.

5.4   CONCLUSION

It is quite clear that to explore the relationship between royal *villae* and minsters a detailed examination of the information provided by the Domesday Survey is required along with historical, archaeological, topographical and morphological evidence. The Yatton case study clearly shows that it is essential to consider how churches relate to nearby settlement, to the surrounding road network and how they are sited within the landscape. For example, Langport church (see Figure 5.4) is sited on a bluff at 28.5 metres above sea level and overlooks wetlands which are on average at 8 metres. Langport was an Alfredian defensive *burh*, as were Axbridge and Lyng, and the churches in all three places are on a high point in the landscape; the question to be asked is which came first the church or the *burh*?

Using Yatton as a case study has highlighted the difficulties in identifying royal *villae* including that place-name evidence on its own is insufficient. It is essential to be aware that evidence may be slight and therefore it is necessary to look at the topographical and morphological relationships between settlements and churches. It is this evidence that can provide confirmation as to whether a specific place was the most important within its locality. For example, in middle Hampshire Klingelhöfer (1992, 84-5) identified several characteristics of what he termed 'archaic hundreds' which always included a known royal or hundredal manor or 'ancient parochial settlement', a mother-church, a 'major pagan Saxon' cemetery and/or an important early settlement. It is also necessary to consider whether these relationships between churches and settlements were influenced by topographical features within the landscape.

Therefore, to understand the relationship between royal *villae* and churches in some *parochiae* a topographical and morphological assessment of the royal *villae* was completed. It was only possible to understand how the Church developed in Somerset by exploring these key spatial relationships. It is these relationships that will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 6

RECONSTRUCTING SOMERSET'S EARLY MEDIEVAL *PAROCHIAE*

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier chapters all the data was considered retrogressively from the nineteenth century through to the pre-Conquest period. This enabled the evidence to be gradually and systematically rolled backwards to show how the Church developed in Somerset. The approach used in this chapter is rather different and is using as its prime sources geographical and topographical data to help identify the boundaries of Somerset's early great estates and their constituent *parochiae*. Identifying these boundaries is the main aim of this chapter and in doing so consideration will be given as to whether the extensive areas of low-lying wetlands in central Somerset influenced their location. Lastly, consideration is given to the extent to which an inter-relationship between the organisation of the early medieval Church and the early great estate and parochial boundaries can be identified. The places discussed at length in this chapter have been mapped, see Figure 6.1.

Initially, a literature review was used to ascertain the post-Roman, or possibly earlier, boundaries identified by others: of early folk territories, early great estates, ecclesiastical estates, and hundreds. All these boundaries were mapped and compared systematically to the topography of the county. This enabled identification of the boundaries which appeared to be topographically determined and therefore likely to be early great estate boundaries. For ease of access these references are given in alphabetical order in Table 6.1.

Figure 6.1.   Places mentioned in Chapter 6

1. Bath
2. Biddisham
3. Brompton Ralph
4. Bruton
5. Cannington
6. Clatworthy
7. Congresbury
8. E. & W. Cranmore
9. Doulting
10. Downhead
11. Frome
12. Glastonbury
13. Huish Champflower
14. Iton
15. Keynsham
16. Lamyatt
17. Langford Budville
18. Marston Magna
19. Martock
20. Meare
21. Milborne Port
22. Milverton
23. Mudford
24. 'Pouholt'
25. Raddington
26. Shapwick
27. Taunton
28. Timberscombe
29. Walton
30. Wedmore
31. Wellow
32. Wells
33. Winsford
34. Wiveliscombe
35. Yatton
36. Yeovil

Scales

miles

kilometres

N

Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

Table 6.1. *Sources used to assist in reconstructing the Somerset's early great estates and early parochiae*

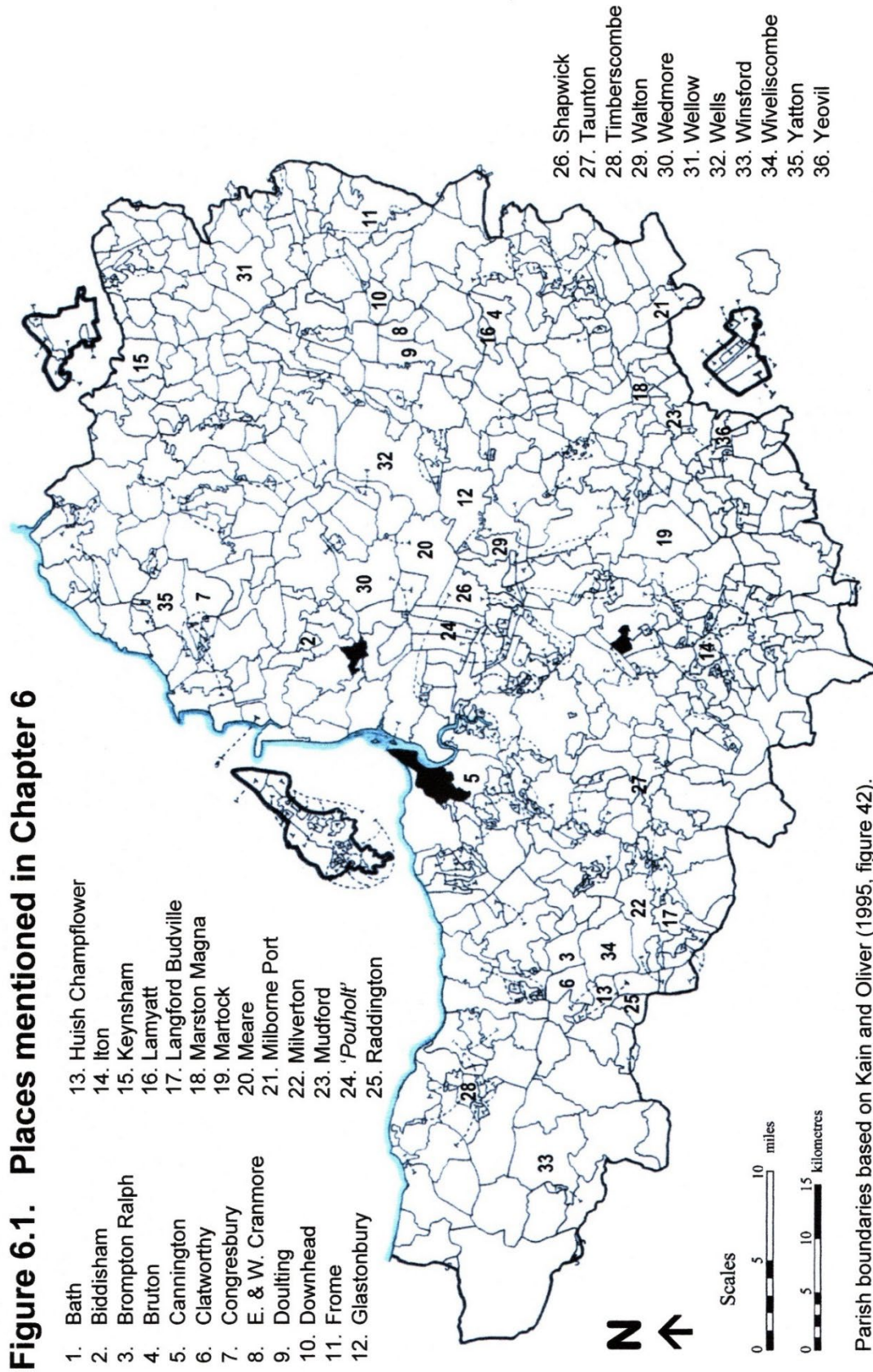| Reference	Reference or page and figure number	Chapter Section number or Figure number and boundaries based on the reference
Abrams (1996)	xiii, map 1; xviii, map 6	**6.2.8** Glastonbury, Ditcheat and Castle Cary *parochiae*
Aston (1986b)	61-89	**6.2.24** Bath estate and *parochia*
Aston (2007)	63-71; 68, figure 2; 83-104; 84, figure 1; 85, figure 2; 87, figure 3	**6.2.9** Ilminster *parochia*
Aston (2009)	90, figure 4	**6.2.10** Isle early great estate and Muchelney
Aston and Costen (2008)	143-5, figure 3; 146-9, figure 4; 150; 151, figure 5	**6.2.6** Congresbury *parochia*
Corcos (2002)	53, figure 11	**6.2.4** Axe and Chew early great estates and Wrington *parochiae*
Costen (1992a)	62, figure 3.3	**6.2.5** Brent *parochia*
	120, figure 5.2	**Figures 6.4 and 6.11** Shapwick *parochia*
	146, figure 6.4	**Figures 6.4 and 6.11** Wells *parochia*
Costen (2011)	69, figure 3.8	**Figures 6.4 and 6.11** Isle early great estate and Curry Rivel *parochia*
	70, figure 3.9	**Figures 6.4 and 6.11** Isle early great estate and Curry Rivel *parochia*
	187-9; 189, figure 9.6	**6.2.8** Glastonbury, Ditcheat and Castle Cary *parochiae*
	197, figure 9.9	**6.2.16** Tone early great estate and Taunton *parochia*
	219, figure 10.7	**6.24** Axe and Chew early great estates and Wrington *parochia*
Domesday Survey (Thorn and Thorn 1980)	*DB* 2,1-3, 5	**6.2.16** Tone early great estate and Taunton *parochia*
	DB 6,5	**6.2.14** Somerton estate and *parochia*
	DB 8,5	**Figures 6.4 and 6.11** Shapwick *parochia*
	DB 8,11	**Figures 6.4 and 6.11** Butleigh *parochia*
Rippon (2006)	69, figure 5.4; 91, figure 6.4 A and B	**6.2.6** Congresbury *parochia*
	129, figure 7.1D	**6.2.4** Axe and Chew early great estates and Wrington *parochia* **6.2.6** Congresbury *parochia* **6.2.18** Wrington *parochia* **6.2.19** Yatton *parochia*
	141-2	**6.2.6** Congresbury *parochia*

Table 6.1 *Sources used to assist in reconstructing the Somerset's early great estates and early parochiae*

Reference	Page and figure number	Chapter Section number or Figure number and boundaries based on the reference
Rippon (2008)	72, figure 3.2	**Figures 6.4 and 6.11** Shapwick *parochia*
	77, figure 3.5	**6.2.8** Glastonbury, Ditcheat and Castle Cary *parochiae*
	99, figure 3.13 B	**6.2.9** Ilminster *parochia* **6.2.10** Isle early great estate and Muchelney **6.2.13** North Petherton parochia **6.2.14** Somerton estate and parochia
Rippon (2012)	158-9, figures 8.4A-D	**6.2.10** Isle early great estate and Muchelney **6.2.14** Somerton estate and *parochia*
	166-7, figures 9.1 A and 9.2	**6.2.17** Washford early great estate, Winsford and Wiveliscombe *parochiae*
	189, table 10.1	**Figures 6.4, 6.10 and 6.11** Early great estates
Thorn (2008)	12, figure 1	**6.2.8** Glastonbury, Ditcheat and Castle Cary *parochiae*
Thorn (2009)	139-51; 142, figure 2	**6.2.11** Keynsham parochia
Thorn (2011)	124, figure 2	**6.2.6** Congresbury *parochia* **6.2.19** Yatton parochia
	128, figure 3	**6.2.4** Axe and Chew early great estates and Wrington *parochia* **6.2.8** Glastonbury, Ditcheat and Castle Cary *parochiae*
	137, figure 4	**6.2.4** Axe and Chew early great estates and Wrington *parochia* **6.2.5** Brent *parochia* **6.2.6** Congresbury *parochia*
	139, figure 5	**6.2.4** Axe and Chew early great estates and Wrington *parochia*
Thorn (2012)	172, figure 3	**6.2.10** Isle early great estate and Muchelney
	173, figure 4,	**6.2.10** Isle early great estate and Muchelney **6.2.14** Somerton estate and *parochia*
	179, figure 7	**6.2.10** Isle early great estate and Muchelney **6.2.14** Somerton estate and *parochia*
Thorn (2014)	14	**6.2.7** Frome estate
	38, figure 9	**6.2.7** Frome estate **6.2.8** Glastonbury, Ditcheat and Castle Cary *parochiae* **6.2.11** Keynsham *parochia* **6.2.12** Kilmersdon *parochia*
	39, figure 10	**6.2.8** Glastonbury, Ditcheat and Castle Cary *parochiae*
Thorn and Thorn (1980)	354 introduction to chapter 6 and note 6,5	**6.2.14** Somerton estate and *parochia*

A similar topographical approach was then used to identify the likely boundaries of the *parochiae* within each early estate. The boundary of each *parochia* was finalised after analysis of the historical, topographical and morphological data for the churches within it.

6.1.1 *The geographical division of Somerset*

The earliest large divisions of counties have been identified as 'folk territories' which then fragmented into the early great estates (Rippon 2006, 126; 2012, 165-84; particularly 183-4). These estates have been described as extensive agricultural holdings which included many settlements dependent on a central royal *villa* (Draper 2006, 60). Their boundaries were determined by local leaders or kings, and not by the Church (Hase 1994, 61-2; see also Pestell 2004, 27). The process by which the early great estates fragmented into a series of early *parochiae* was explored in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.2-1.2.3) and it is clear that in order to understand the structure of the early medieval Church it is essential to identify first the geographical framework within which it was established (for a wider perspective on this see Phythian-Adams 1991, 6-9).

John Blair (2005, 153-5) has discussed the historiography of when and why both the secular and ecclesiastical geographical frameworks existing in the early medieval period were established. He concluded that the existence of 'an early parochial system' was the plausible forerunner to the later network of small parishes (Blair 2005, 154). Stephen Yeates (2006), Andrew Davidson (2009), and Paul MacCottar (2019) have also demonstrated that an early parochial system did exist which consisted of large *parochiae*. In Somerset it is apparent that these *parochiae* fragmented, prior to the eleventh century, into the network of parishes which largely still existed in the sixteenth century (see Section 3.3 and Figure 3.8). The main objective of this chapter is to demonstrate that Somerset had an early parochial system which developed when the early great estates fragmented into a series of large *parochiae* and that they provided the framework within which the archdeaconries and deaneries were established.

There is increasingly a consensus that the boundaries of the early great estates were topographically defined (Klingelhöfer 1992, 84; Draper 2006, 69) and similarly those of the early medieval minster *parochiae* as discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.2). Eric Klingelhöfer (1992, 84) following his research, into the geographical divisions existing in the early medieval period in middle Hampshire, concluded that they were defined by river valleys and that within each of them there was a mother-church. He stressed that it was important to take account of the extent to which topography determined administrative divisions and noted that increasingly these topographic divisions were being 'recognized as fundamental determinants for social and political entities' (Klingelhöfer 1992, 84). Following Theresa Hall's (2000, 28, 82) subsequent historical research into Dorset's minster *parochiae* she concluded that they were founded within large riverine estates held by the royal family or the Church and that the boundaries of these estates were demarcated by the hills surrounding river valleys. In Wiltshire Simon Draper (2006, 69) identified 'a number of topographically-based 'archaic hundreds'' where, as in Hampshire, these 'archaic hundreds', dating from the fifth and sixth centuries, were based on the catchment area of a river, with the river-valley at their centre. It was these riverine estates that later formed the basis of the *parochiae* of the early medieval minsters in Wiltshire (Draper 2006, 69).

There is therefore good reason to consider whether in Somerset topographically determined boundaries provided the geographical framework for the division of the county into a series of early great estates (Thorn 2008, 18). In addition whether, when Somerset was subsequently sub-divided into early medieval *parochiae*, their boundaries were determined or influenced by rivers or the lie of the land. In exploring how the Church evolved in Somerset during the early medieval period it is important to visualise it as a continuum involving both continuity and change. The evidence provided by the Domesday Survey only gives a snapshot of how things were in 1066 and 1086. It cannot be assumed that it delineates, for example, the pattern of ownership in the eighth century or earlier. This then poses the question: how can a chronology of Church development be identified? The first step must be to identify the early great estates which provided the framework within which the Church evolved.

6.2   IDENTIFYING THE EARLY BOUNDARIES WITHIN SOMERSET

In the main it was relatively straightforward identifying which boundaries in Somerset were topographically defined; see Figure 1.1 for an overview of Somerset's topography. In many cases boundaries followed areas of higher ground and the watersheds of streams and rivers. Elsewhere boundaries were defined by rivers and some boundaries crossed large areas of wetlands. Sometimes the topographical boundary between two early great estates or *parochiae* was unclear until other information was used, for example the relationship between a mother-church and her chapelries.

Chapter 5 (Section 5.3) used Yatton as a case study to consider how early medieval boundaries might be identified, although it did not consider the early great estate boundaries around Yatton it clearly showed how relationships between places were influenced by topography. For example, Congresbury, despite being physically close to Yatton, was topographically in a different land unit because it was on the opposite side of the river Yeo. In addition, to the west of both Congresbury and Yatton there are extensive areas of low-lying wetlands either side of the river. The process used to identify the boundaries of Somerset's early great estates and their constituent *parochiae* will now be considered in detail.

6.2.1   *Identifying the early great estate boundaries*

All the boundaries proposed by other scholars (see Section 6.1) were recorded on a map based on Kain and Oliver's map of Somerset's nineteenth-century parishes (see Figure 6.2; Kain and Oliver 1995, figure 42). This map was then used in conjunction with a current edition 1:40,000 large-scale OS map constructed for each postulated early great estate using a series of printouts from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap). The 1:40,000 scale was chosen because it enables the full range of topographical features, including contours and spot heights, to be correlated to the early great estate boundaries.

Figure 6.2.   Early boundaries proposed by others

Abrams 1996

Aston 2007, 2009

Aston and Costen 2008

Corcos 2002

Costen 1992, 2011

Rippon 2006

Rippon 2008

Rippon 2012

Thorn 2008, 2009

Thorn 2011

Thorn 2012

Thorn 2014

DB 2, 1,3,10.

NOTE The source maps are not always easy to interpret, so these boundaries are approximate.

Details of references are listed in Table 6.1.

Approximate 12 hides of Glastonbury church estate

Approximate Muchelney church estate

Scales

miles

kilometres

Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

This then enabled the major topographical features of each postulated estate to be highlighted. The maps also show the position of churches in relation to both their geographical and topographical position within the landscape. This approach has enabled the location of the estate boundaries to be clearly identified, albeit for most estates it was aligned on the nineteenth-century parish boundaries.

The likely early estate boundaries were then plotted on an enlarged print of the Somersetshire map engraved by Gray and Son and drawn by James Bell which was published in 'A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of England and Wales in 1834' (Humphery-Smith 1995, 2-3 of editor's Introduction). The advantage of using this map is that the various ranges of hills in Somerset are shown very clearly. The original map did not include all the rivers, so any missing rivers have been added, as have some areas of higher ground based on modern OS maps. An extract from the map is shown in Figure 6.3; it illustrates very clearly that river catchment areas on higher ground were significant in defining the early estate boundaries. The Brendon Hills, for example, divide the Exe and Washford estates as shown in Figure 6.3. This topographical analysis enabled the boundaries of the early great estates to be finalised as shown in Figure 6.4.

6.2.2   *Identifying Somerset's early medieval parochiae*

A similar approach to that adopted to identify the early estate boundaries was then used to identify the likely topographical divisions within each estate which might relate to its internal parochial boundaries. The large-scale map for each early estate was annotated so that its internal topography was identified:

- did it contain high ground or watersheds within which rivers originated;
- where did the rivers run, might they have been used as boundaries;
- were there other topographical features such as low-lying wetlands that might have been used as boundaries; and lastly
- how did these possible topographically determined boundaries relate to the overall early estate?

Figure 6.3.   Section of topographical map showing putative early great estate boundaries

— Putative early great estate boundaries

— Putative early great estate boundaries

Section of an adapted and annotated copy of the Somersetshire map engraved by Gray and Son and drawn by James Bell which was published in 'A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of England and Wales in 1834' (Humphery-Smith 1995, 2-3 [pages are not numbered] of editor's Introduction). **Permission kindly granted to use this map by The History Press who currently own the copyright.**

Scales

N ←

Figure 6.4.   Early great estate boundaries as proposed by others

▬▬▬ Early great estate boundaries proposed by others

NOTE See Figure 6.2 for details of who proposed each boundary. The source maps from which these maps are

Scales
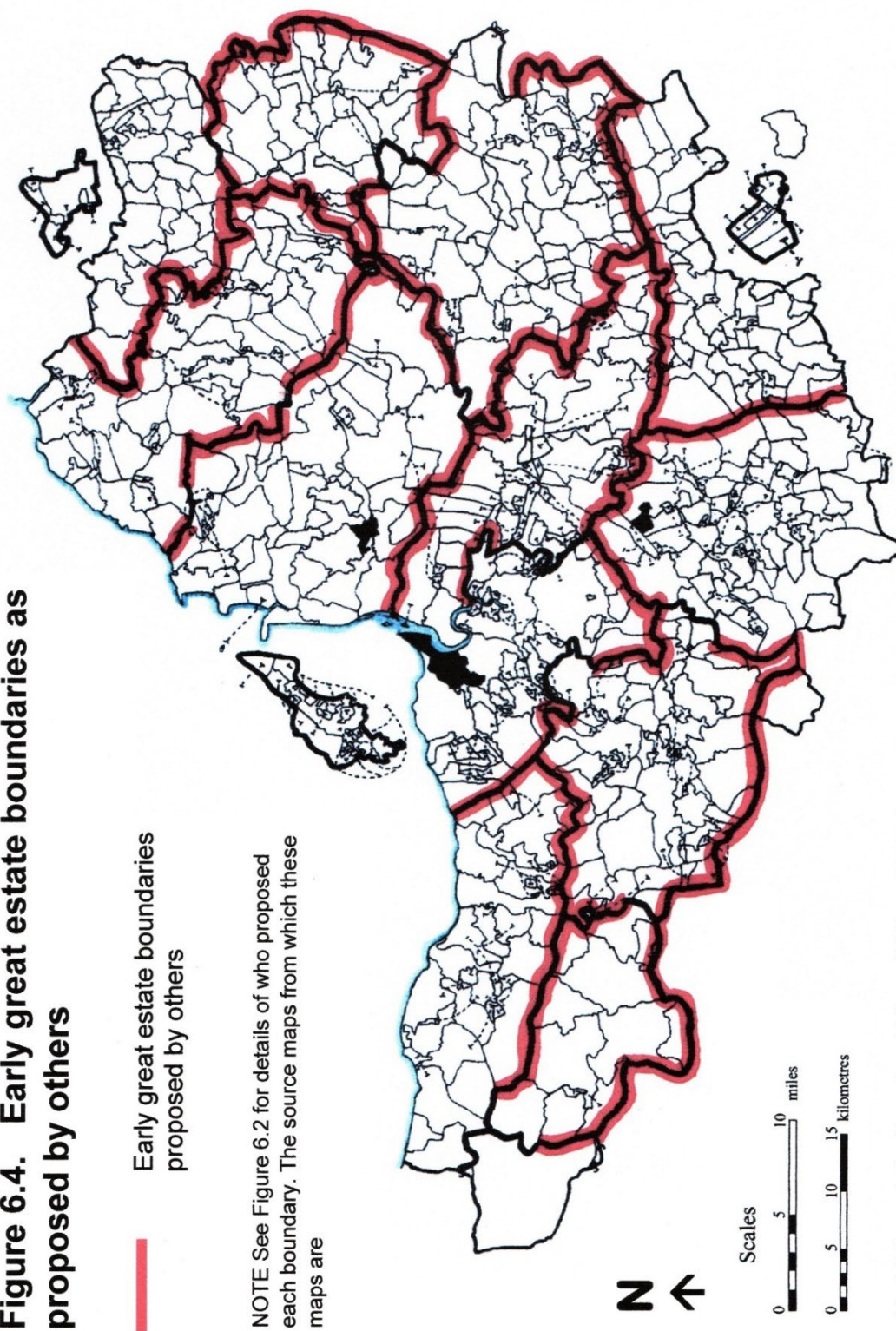
Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

These possible topographical boundaries were then compared to the early boundaries detailed in Figure 6.2 to see whether they had been initially determined by their topography.

Churches that had been identified as having an importance rating of 4 (see Chapter 4) or more are highlighted on each map. Sometimes it is uncertain as to which early estate or *parochia* a church belonged in which case this was resolved by considering how it is sited within the landscape. For example, in which direction did the church overlook lower ground or a river valley, as in the view from Langford Budville church (Figure 6.5)?

Figure 6.5.   *View looking eastwards across the Tone valley from Langford Budville Churchyard which is on a local high point within the landscape (author's photo).*

There are numerous churches in Somerset which are sited on high points in the landscape overlooking low-lying ground as at Langford Budville and at Raddington. Chapter 7 discusses these churches in detail and reaches the conclusion that they date from before the seventh century and should be

classified as post-Roman (see Section 7.2). There are no indications that these sites were associated with a high-status settlement but rather with Romano-British temples and early medieval inhumation cemeteries as at Henley Wood, although in this instance the known minster church at Yatton is sited in the valley below Henley Wood as is the likely royal *villa* at Kingston Seymour (see Section 5.3). Langford Budville church is, for example sited close to a typical hill top early medieval inhumation cemetery (Som. HER No. 44689), while Raddington church is sited on such a high rocky outcrop (at 202.31 metres above sea level) that there is no scope for any sort of settlement close to the church. Raddington church is sited about 90 metres higher than Wiveliscombe church which is on the side of a hill. Raddington was initially included in the Exe early estate (for the initial boundary see Rippon 2012, 166, figure 9.1A, 189, table 10.1) but because it overlooks Wiveliscombe it is included within the Tone early estate (see Figure 6.2). In some areas of the county identifying the boundaries between the early great estates, or between *parochiae*, was problematic and has required systematic and detailed interpretation of the topographical detail on the relevant OS map.

The most difficult analysis was probably the early great estate of Bruton. The boundaries around it are difficult to determine as the area is generally hilly (Figure 6.6), for example Creech Hill (ST666 366) between Evercreech and Bruton, and the ridges between Chesterblade and Batcombe (ST669 402). However, sometimes using an OS map is insufficient to make sense of where a topographically defined boundary might lie within the landscape, in which case historical information is used. For example, the pattern of chapelries associated with a mother-church. This is the case in determining the topographically determined boundary between the early estates of Bruton and Frome. Initially the boundary was based on the Bruton and Frome hundred boundaries determined by Thorn (2014). However, topographically it was clear that Downhead, East Cranmore and West Cranmore should be included within the Bruton early estate, together with Shepton Mallet and their mother-church of Doulting (Figure 6.7), and not in the Frome estate; this is discussed in detail below. It was not however, always the case that relationships between a church

and its chapel could be used to determine an early estate or parochial
boundary.
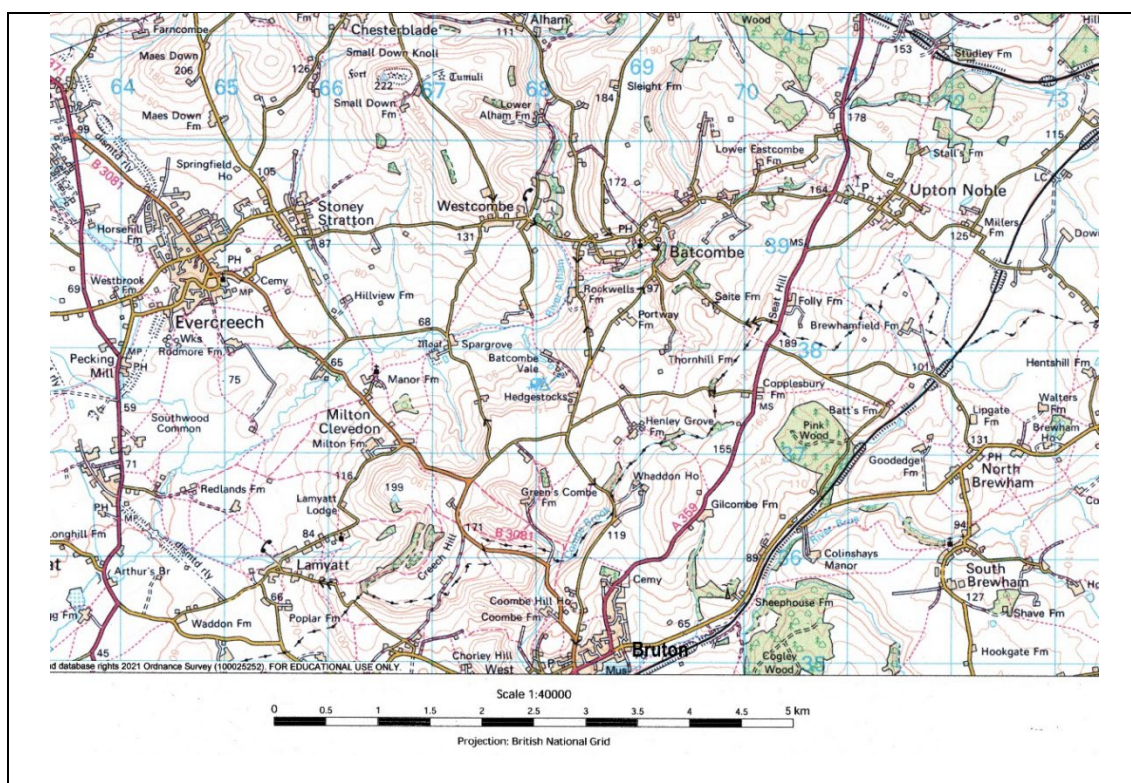
Figure 6.6. *OS map of area around Bruton showing topographical relationships between Bruton, Batcombe and Evercreech (scale 1:50,000, Ordnance Survey Current Online Edition, Landmark Information Group, UK downloaded [March 2021] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).*

This was true of the relationship between Wedmore and its chapel of Biddisham
because Biddisham parish is not adjacent to Wedmore parish as shown in
Figure 6.8. It is also of note that Wedmore and Biddisham have been identified
as being in different parochiae. The basis on which the individual early estate
boundaries, the parochial minsters and their parochial boundaries are identified
is discussed below.
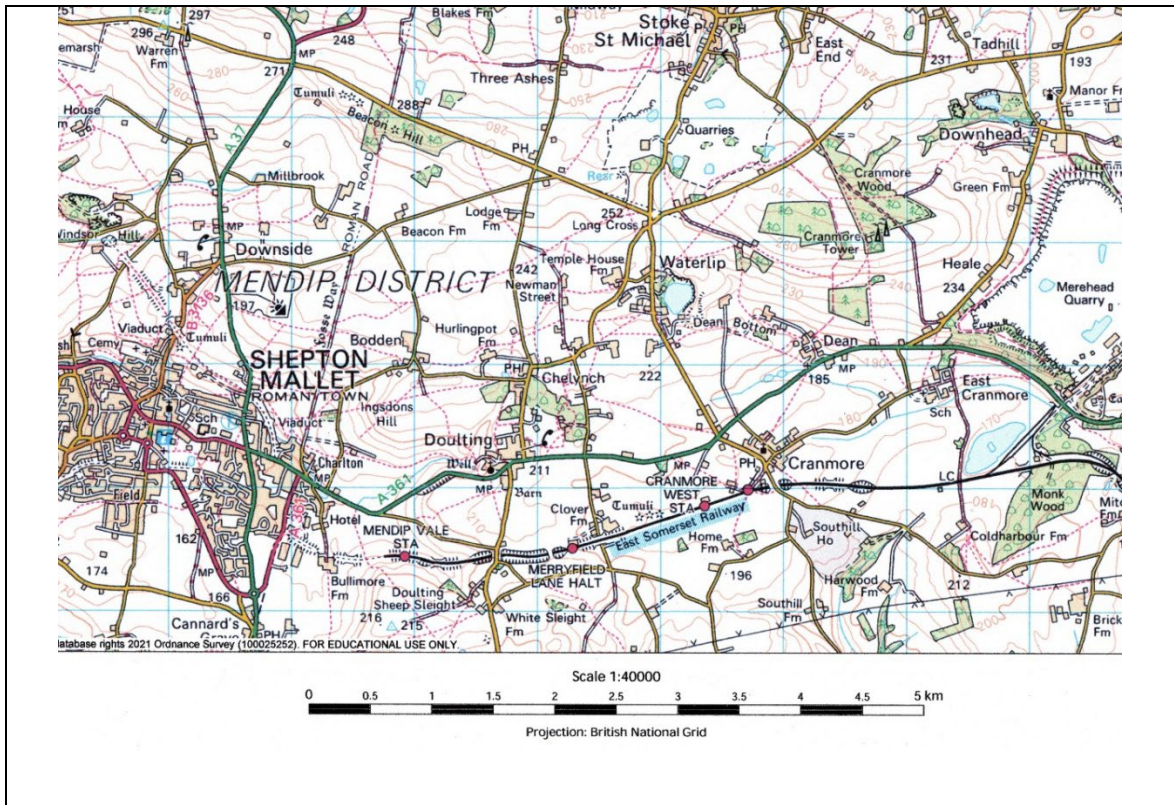
Figure 6.7. *Area around Doulting showing the topographical setting of the chapelries of East and West Cranmore and Downhead (scale 1:50,000, Ordnance Survey Current Online Edition, Landmark Information Group, UK downloaded [March 2021] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).*
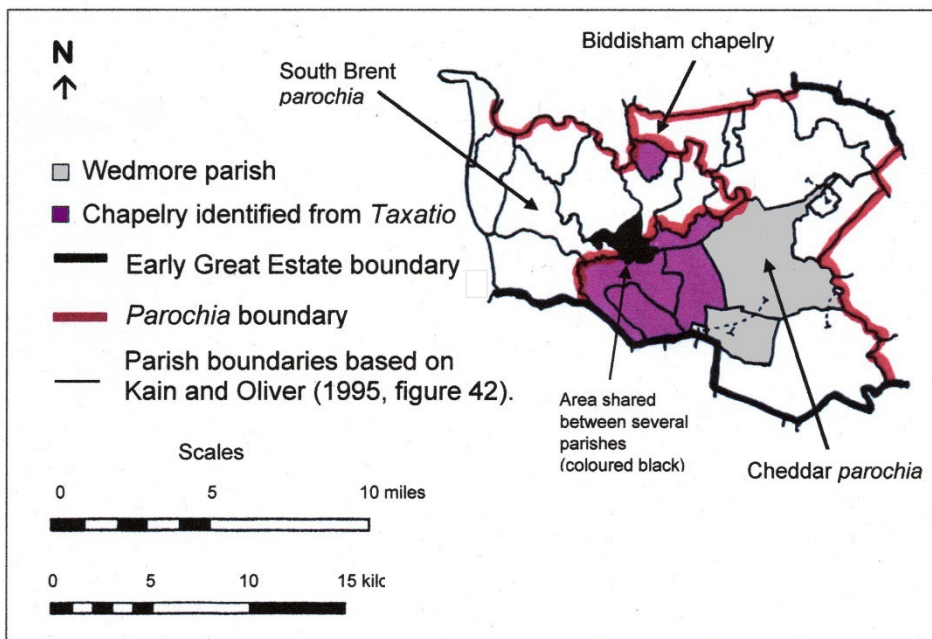
Figure 6.8. *Map showing chapelries of Wedmore (section of Figure 3.5). The chapelries of Blackford, Chapel Allerton and Mark are all adjacent to the parish of Wedmore and within the Cheddar parochia while Biddisham chapelry is detached and within the South Brent parochia.*

6.2.3   *Boundaries of the early great estates and their constituent parochiae*

As detailed above a systematic approach was used to reconstruct the putative boundaries of the early great estates and how it impacted on their constituent *parochiae*. If the boundary of an early estate, as proposed by another researcher, was redrawn it was either to establish a consensus view based on the work of others or it was to reflect the most likely topographical boundary. How these topographical boundaries were determined is discussed above in Sections 5.3, 6.2, 6.2.1 and 6.2.2, see also Figures 6.3 and 6.4. The commentaries below on the early estate and *parochia* boundaries whose boundaries were amended (see Figure 6.9) are based on the sources listed in Table 6.1. The commentaries include any changes made to the boundaries and, critically, the reasons why those changes were made. The finalised map of the early great estate boundaries is shown below in Figure 6.10.

6.2.4   *Axe and Chew early great estates and Wrington parochia*

- **Changes to boundaries proposed by other researchers:** Two changes have been made; the change relating to the Congresbury *parochia* is discussed below. The other change relates to including Blagdon within the Chew early great estate rather than the Axe estate. To the south and south-west of Blagdon is an area of high ground which includes Beacon Batch (325 metres). Blagdon church, at 100.32 metres above sea level, is on the northern side of these hills overlooking to the north-north-west the river Yeo which flows downhill to Wrington church (19.55 metres). Therefore the reason for making this change is topographical.

Figure 6.9.   Early great estate boundary changes

Possible early great estate boundary

Areas affected by boundary changes

1. Blagdon
2. Broomfield
3. Congresbury area
4. East & West Cranmore & Downhead
5. Englishcombe, Newton St Lo, Priston & Stanton Prior
6. Middlezoy area – possible shared wetlands
7. Pawlett
8. Raddington   9. Thorn Faulcon & Thurlbeer

Scales
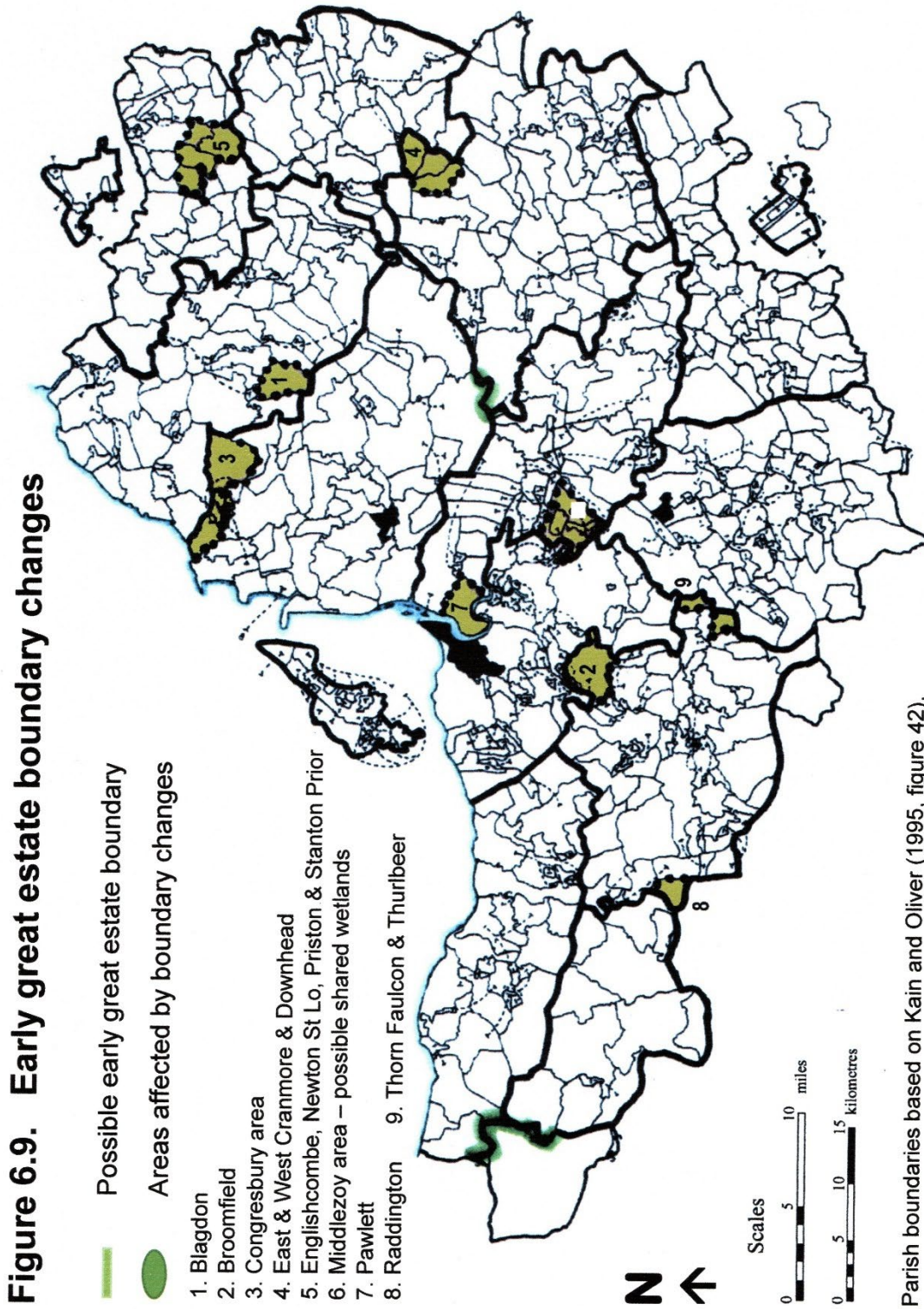
Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

6.2.5   *Brent parochia*

The river Axe provides a topographical boundary between the *parochiae* of [South] Brent and Congresbury and divides the parish of Bleadon from those of Brean and Lympsham.

- **Change to boundary proposed by other researchers:** Only one change was made which means that the parish of Pawlett is included within the *parochia* because the river Parrett was used as the southern boundary rather than the hundred boundary.

6.2.6   *Congresbury parochia*

The sources used indicate that Puxton was linked with Congresbury and that the early estate boundary between the Chew and Axe early estates ran between Wick St Lawrence and Kingstone Seymour. The river Axe provided a topographical boundary between the *parochiae* of Congresbury and [South] Brent as discussed above. In addition, it should be noted that the parishes of Rowberrow and Shipham were originally part of Winscombe.

- **Changes to boundaries proposed by other researchers:** Rippon (2006, 69, figure 5.4, see also 91, figure 6.4, 129, figure 7.1D) investigates whether Yatton and Congresbury formed a single unit and discusses the possible construction of sea walls and the blocking of tidal creeks, which if it had happened would have divided Congresbury from Yatton. Critically, it seems likely that the river Yeo which runs south-east to north-west between Yatton and Congresbury would have formed the estate boundary. Initially Burrington was allocated to this *parochia*, but topographically its relationship is with Wrington because Burrington (church at 71.27 metres) overlooks the low-lying land around the river Yeo within which Wrington is sited. Blagdon, a later chapel of Wrington, has a similar topographical relationship to Wrington and therefore was included within the Wrington *parochia*.

6.2.7 *Frome estate*

Thorn's historical research (2014, 14, 38, figure 9) is used as the basis for establishing the early territory of Frome. He lists the places within the three 1084/86 Frome hundreds and after analysing the topography of the early territory, the three hundreds have been used as the basis for the three *parochiae* within the Frome estate as the boundaries of the *parochiae* are defined topographically by ranges of hills.

- **Changes to boundaries proposed by other researchers:** Thorn (2014, 14) included [East and West] Cranmore and Downhead within the Frome hundred, but as they were both chapels of Doulting and topographically relate to Doulting (church at 205.44 metres) they have not been included within it. Doulting is on slightly higher ground than Cranmore (187 metres) and Downhead (church at 195.47 metres). However, to the south, west and north of them are areas of higher ground which include Small Down Knoll (222 metres; ST666 406), Heale (234 metres; ST686 447) and near East End there is a high point of 240 metres (ST671 467). This area of high ground provides a topographically defined boundary which divides the Frome and Pilton *parochiae*. Therefore Cranmore, Downhead and Doulting have been included in the Pilton *parochia*.

6.2.8 *Glastonbury, Ditcheat and Castle Cary parochiae*

- **Changes to boundaries proposed by other researchers:** These are based on the view that the relatively late boundary (after the mid-seventh century; Costen 2011, 187-9) of the original 12 hides of Glastonbury possibly did not reflect earlier boundaries. It is possible that the 12 hides may have been part of a shared area of low-lying land during the post-Roman period which also included Meare. The proposed early great estate boundary would have been topographically determined and this is discussed in detail below. It is therefore proposed that the boundary ran between Meare and Glastonbury across what would have been an extensive area of low-lying wetlands. This means that the early Glastonbury *parochia* would have included Ditcheat and Castle Cary.

6.2.9   *Ilminster parochia*

In the same way that the granting of the 12 hides to Glastonbury possibly disturbed earlier territorial arrangements, the creation of the monastic Ilminster estate (see Aston 2007; 2009) disturbed the earlier post-Roman division of the landscape. Steven Rippon (2008, 99, figure 3.13B) details how the early 'greater Ilton estate' fragmented into Crewkerne, Curry Rivel, Ilminster, North Curry and South Petherton estates.

6.2.10   *Isle early great estate and Muchelney*

Muchelney was included within the Isle early great estate, so that the eastern boundary of the Isle estate and of Muchelney is the river Yeo; Muchelney lies between the Parrett and Yeo or Ivel rivers. See discussion below about including Muchelney within the *parochia* of South Petherton.

6.2.11   *Keynsham parochia*

Discussed below is the boundary between Keynsham *parochia* and the Bath early great estate elements of North Stoke and Kelston as the river Avon forms a crucial part of its boundary.

- **Changes to boundaries proposed by other researchers:** The later parishes of Corston, Newton St Lo, Twerton and Englishcombe (church at 74.55 metres) are described by Thorn (2014, 38, figure 9) as being part of the possible large early territory of Frome. These parishes belonged to the Redcliffe Deanery in *c.*1291, together with Priston, and were not in the Frome Deanery. The proposed early great estate and *parochia* boundary to the south of Priston and Englishcombe is sited on higher ground running westwards from 169 metres near Tunley (ST693 594) to Duncorn Hill (175 metres; ST710 606) to 170.4 metres (ST734 617) close to the Wansdyke near Odd Down, Bath. The proposed northern boundary of the Frome estate and the southern boundary of the Avon estate is therefore defined by this range of hills.

6.2.12 Kilmersdon *parochia*:

- **Change to boundary:** See the discussion above on the Frome early estate as the only change relates to [East and West] Cranmore and Downhead.

6.2.13 *North Petherton parochia*

- **Changes to boundaries proposed by other researchers:** The southern boundary of the North Petherton *parochia* and therefore the southern boundary of the later parishes of Creech St Michael and Lyng is the river Tone and its associated low-lying wetlands. Steven Rippon (2008, 99, figure 3.13B) shows the boundary as cutting off the northern section (the salt moors) of the later parish of Stoke St Gregory. This is likely given that the low-lying wetlands either side of the river would have been shared.

6.2.14 *Somerton estate and parochia*

- **Changes to boundaries proposed by other researchers:** The Domesday place listed as '*Litnes*' (*DB* 6,5) would have been a more compact area than the later parish of Huish Episcopi which is in several parts. This is presumably because the Huish Episcopi Prebend was not created until the bishopric of Reginald de Bohun (1174-91) and was created from churches on the ancient episcopal estate (Greenway 2001, xxiii). The later parish of Huish Episcopi was therefore not a long-standing geographical unit. Other researchers have placed the later parish of Huish Episcopi in the Somerton Hundred in *c.*950 (Thorn 2012, 173, figure 4). As discussed above it was difficult to define the eastern boundary of Somerton *parochia*; Northover (but not Ilchester) was included within it.

6.2.15 *South Petherton parochia*

The delineation of this *parochia* reflects the fragmentation of the 'greater Ilton estate' as discussed above. The boundary of the *parochia* was drawn to

enclose all the chapels held by South Petherton, except for the thirteenth-century chapel of Barrington.

- **Changes to boundaries proposed by other researchers:** The boundary for the southern edge of the South Petherton *parochia* was defined as follows. There is a line of higher ground to the south of South Petherton's chapelries which runs westwards from Sprays Hill (182 metres; ST357 108) to Higher Wood (205 metres) to Windwhistle (217.8 metres) which then turns northwards near Warren House (198 metres; ST405 101) to near Beech Copse (108 metres; ST405 124) where it turns eastwards again. The chapelries held by South Petherton church are all within the *parochia* of South Petherton, except for the chapel of Barrington which following Aston's (2009) research was included in the Ilminster *parochia*.

    See the discussion below about the Isle early great estate and the inclusion of Muchelney within it. After considering all the evidence concerning Muchelney, the decision was made to include it within the *parochia* of South Petherton. This was despite making the decision to include Drayton within the Curry Rivel *parochia* even though pre-1066 Muchelney church held Drayton. The reason for these decisions is that the river Parrett, and aa associated area of low-lying land, divides Muchelney from both Curry Rivel and Drayton.

6.2.16   *Tone early great estate and Taunton parochia*

Broomfield was included within Taunton *parochia* because Broomfield church (at 199.31 metres) overlooks the Tone river valley within which sits Taunton.

- **Changes to boundaries proposed by other researchers:** Thorn Faulcon (church at *c.*24 metres) and Thurlbeer (54.12 metres) have been included within the Taunton *parochia* because they are in the Taunton Deanery and topographically, they both look towards Taunton (18.28 metres) in the valley of the river Tone.

6.2.17 *Washford early great estate, Winsford and Wiveliscombe parochiae*

The later hundred boundary was used to establish the southern boundary of both the estate and *parochiae*. This boundary runs through an extensive range of hills reaching to 400 metres above sea level to the north of Exford which is sited in the valley of the river Exe. Exford is therefore included in the Winsford *parochia*.

- **Change to boundary proposed by another researcher:** The Exe early great estate boundary proposed by Rippon (2012, 166-7, figures 9.1 and 9.2) was amended to exclude Raddington (now located within the Tone estate and therefore in the *parochia* of Wiveliscombe). This change is because, as discussed earlier (see Section 6.2.2), the land behind Raddington church is higher and the church faces downhill towards Wiveliscombe.

6.2.18 *Wrington parochia*

- **Change to boundary:** Burrington was included within this *parochia* as discussed above in Section 6.2.6.

6.2.19 *Yatton parochia*

- **Changes to boundaries proposed by other researchers:** The decision to include Yatton and Congresbury within different early estates is discussed above (see Section 6.2.6) in relation to Congresbury.

6.2.20 *Yeo and Cary early great estates, Martock and Mudford parochiae*

It has proved difficult to identify the western boundary of the Mudford *parochia*.

- **Definition of boundary:** Using topographical evidence, rather than the deanery boundaries, the decision was made to include Thorne Coffin and Ilchester (but not Northover) within the Martock *parochia.* The river Yeo or Ivel was used as the boundary to the north thereby separating Ilchester and Northover, and therefore the Somerton and Yeo estates. To

the south-east and east of Thorne Coffin (74 metres) there is higher ground with a high point at Vagg Farm (108.19 metres; ST533 181) forming a topographically defined boundary which separates the Martock and Yeovil *parochiae*. Therefore, Thorne Coffin (church at 18.15 metres) which is sited within low-lying ground to the west of Martock is included within Martock *parochia*.

Based on the topographical evidence Limington (church at 26.77 metres) was included within the Mudford *parochia*. Limington looks east towards the river Yeo which runs through Mudford (20 metres). In the late thirteenth century Limington was in the Ilchester Deanery while Mudford was in the Marston Deanery (*Taxatio*).

The topographical evidence is such that the deanery boundary does not reflect the earlier *parochia* boundary.

Twelve early great estates have been identified and they have been named after the most significant river running through each estate. The finalised map of the early *parochiae* is shown in Figure 6.11. The *parochiae* have been named after the central church or minster within them. How these were identified is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

6.2.21   *Shared areas of low-lying wetlands and their influence on boundaries*

As already discussed, the post-Roman estate boundaries, and possibly earlier boundaries, were determined in many cases by rivers, watersheds on higher ground and hills. In addition, in Somerset there are many areas of low-lying wetlands which formed topographically determined boundaries. There are four significant areas:

Figure 6.10.   Somerset's early great estates

Estates are named after the main river within each estate

Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

Figure 6.11.   Somerset's early *parochiae*

Parochial names are derived from the identified parochial minsters. The process by which they were identified is discussed in Chapter 8.

CR = Curry Rivel

HM = Hardington Mandeville

NC = North Curry

SP = South Petherton
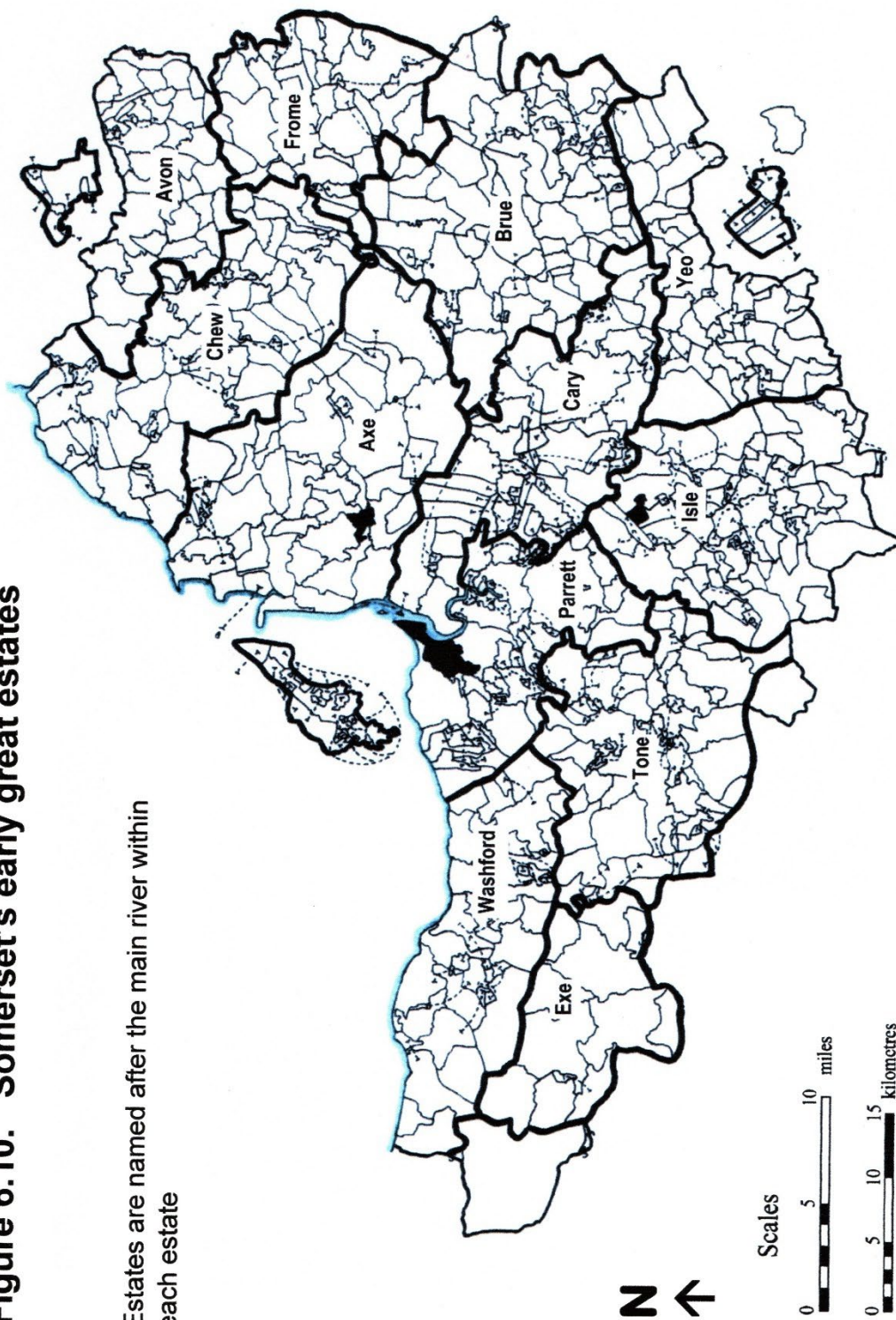
Map based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).
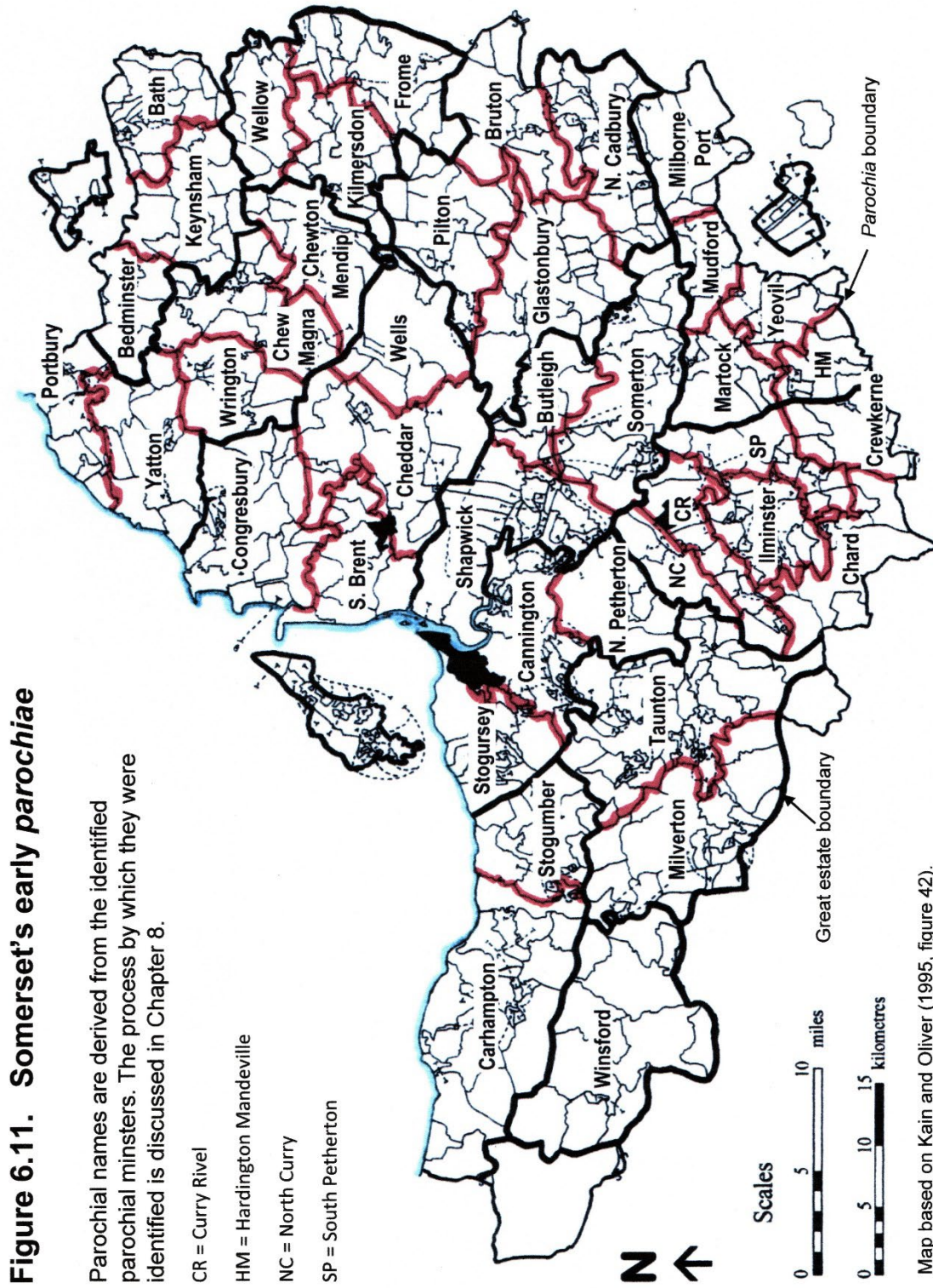
- the southern levels which include Sedgemoor and the 'island' of '*Sowy*'; these lie between the Blackdown and Polden hills which are drained by the river Parrett and its tributaries;

- the central levels which include the 'islands' of Wedmore and Brent Knoll; these lie between the Polden and the Mendip hills which are drained by the rivers Brue and Axe;

- the northern levels beyond the Mendips which are drained by the Congresbury Yeo, the Kenn and Clevedon Yeo rivers; and

- the Gordano moors (Bond 2006, 122).

Currently all these areas are at risk of flooding during periods of heavy rain, particularly in the winter (Costen 2011, 113), but during the early medieval period they would have been inundated on a regular basis (Bond 2006, 123). Within these wetlands there are 'islands' of land which have always remained dry and used for human habitation and religious sites, for example Middlezoy. The wetlands provided a rich agricultural resource for summer pasture for livestock, fish, wildfowl, peat for fuel and willow for basket making (Bond 2006, 124). Unfortunately, although post-Conquest exploitation of these wetlands probably did take place as Bond has propos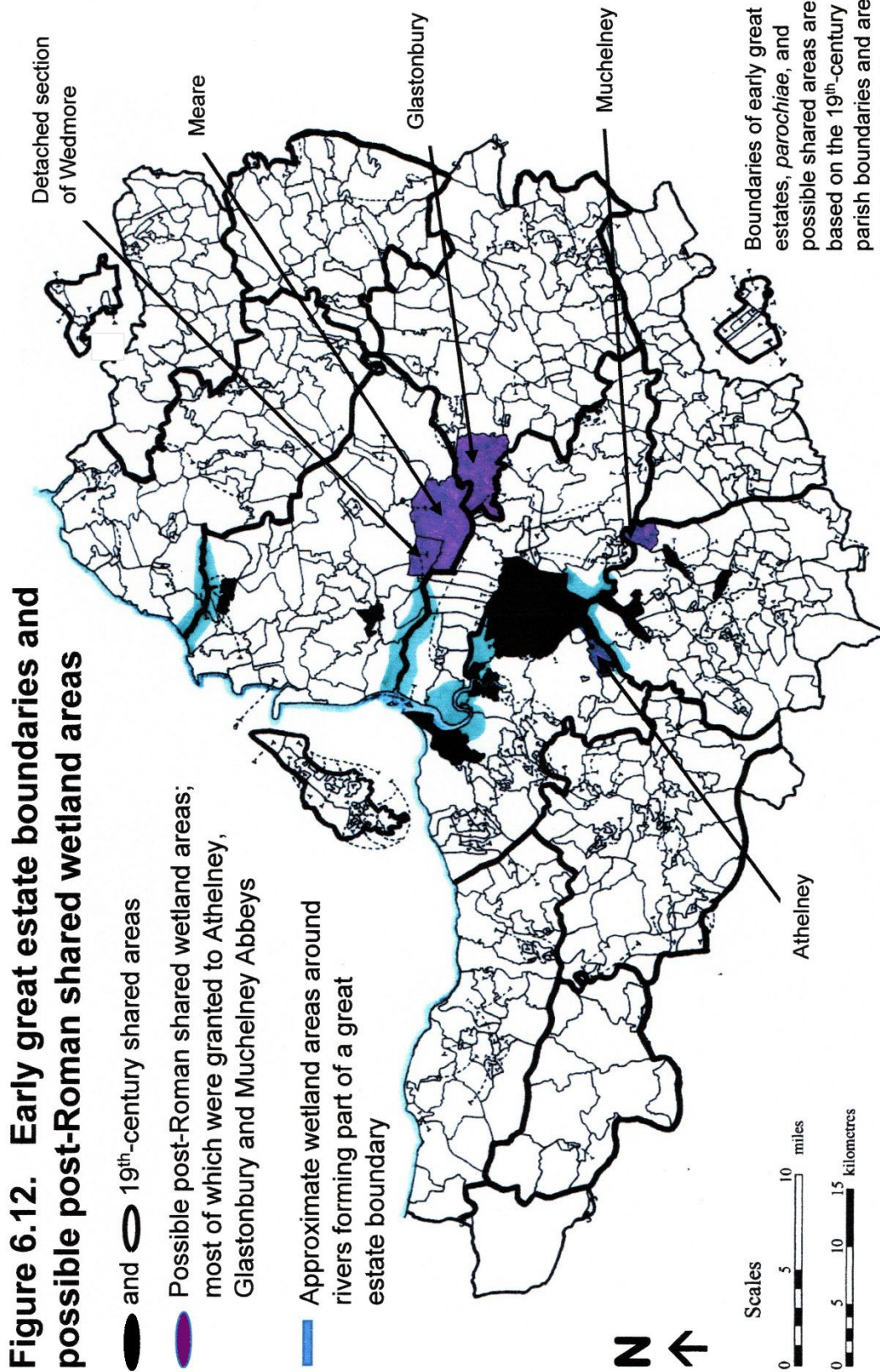ed, there is virtually no evidence to indicate how the Somerset wetlands was exploited during the early medieval period (Abrams 1996, 266).

6.2.22   *Glastonbury and Muchelney ecclesiastical estates*

The settlements on higher ground in central Somerset, such as the Polden Hills or 'marsh islands' like Chedzoy, had long-standing customary 'rights of common pasturage' on the wetlands known as the Somerset Levels (Pearce 2004, 61; see also Williams 1970, 32). Indeed, parts of these extensive wetlands were still shared between parishes in the nineteenth century as is shown by the nineteenth-century Tithe Maps (Figure 6.12; Kain and Oliver 1995, figure 42). It therefore seems likely that they were shared, or held in common, by several communities in the post-Roman and early medieval periods.

Figure 6.12.   Early great estate boundaries and possible post-Roman shared wetland areas

and ⬭ 19th-century shared areas

⬭ Possible post-Roman shared wetland areas; most of which were granted to Athelney, Glastonbury and Muchelney Abbeys

▮ Approximate wetland areas around rivers forming part of a great estate boundary

Detached section of Wedmore

Meare

Glastonbury

Muchelney

Athelney

Boundaries of early great estates, *parochiae*, and possible shared areas are based on the 19th-century parish boundaries and are therefore not definitive.

Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

Scales

N

The indications are that the long-standing division of central Somerset into separate early great estates was fundamentally changed and disrupted by the granting of these shared areas of wetland to Glastonbury and Muchelney Abbeys. In addition, the detached section of Wedmore parish is also low-lying and may have been shared territory before it was granted to the bishop of Wells. Common land which had been utilised by neighbouring communities within two or more early great estates was now given to the Church. Unfortunately, we have no understanding of how the Somerset Levels were exploited by Glastonbury Abbey or the bishop of Wells, nor the extent to which water levels on the wetlands were managed during the early medieval period. We therefore do not know the extent to which the abbey permitted shared use to continue (Abrams 1996, 267; Stacy 2001, 43).

Having identified the boundaries of the Bruton early great estate and neighbouring early estates it can be seen how the boundaries of the Glastonbury estate (see Figures 6.10 and 6.12; Abrams 1996, xiii) cut across the post-Roman great estate boundaries. There is no firm evidence to indicate when Glastonbury abbey was first granted land, but it is likely to have been in the sixth or seventh centuries (Gilchrist and Green 2015; Som. HER No. 25547). It seems likely that before being granted to Glastonbury Abbey the area later equating to the parishes of Meare and Glastonbury was shared territory. The decision to override how this territory was used in order to grant it wholesale to the abbey is echoed in the changes imposed by King William when he took land away from thanes and gave it to the bishop of Coutances (*DB* 5.1-5.70). Alfward for example, held Dowlish and two thanes held Chaffcombe before 1066 but by 1086 they were held by the bishop (*DB* 5.1-5.2). Historical research has shown that the original land grants to Glastonbury and Muchelney Abbeys comprised islands of dry land within the Somerset Levels (Aston 2007, 64-5; 2009, 91). This thesis, by establishing the probable boundaries of the early great estates, demonstrates that Aston (2009, 91) was correct in identifying that the land grants to Glastonbury Abbey were of poor quality agricultural and marginal land.

6.2.23   *Boundaries across the wetlands of Somerset*

Across central Somerset there are areas of wetlands which formed natural divisions between the early great estates in the same way that ranges of hills did. The extensive area of wetlands either side of the river Parrett for example, divides the Isle and Parrett estates. Indeed, it is to be expected that this 'conjunction of geography with early territorial realities' will always be a determinant of long-standing territorial boundaries (Phythian-Adams 1991, 7), although their exact line cannot be determined. Therefore, the nineteenth-century parish boundaries have in the main been used. Figure 6.12 shows the division of the early great estates and possible areas of shared wetlands in the post-Roman period utilised as early estate boundaries and the main areas still shared between several parishes in the nineteenth century.

The next step in understanding how the Church developed in Somerset is to consider whether the early great estate boundaries influenced the organisation of the institution. In the Bath and Wells Diocese there were, and still are, three archdeaconries; Bath, Taunton and Wells which in *c.*1291 geographically split the county (*Taxatio*). Each of these was in turn divided geographically into deaneries and the first significant evidence for them dates from the late-thirteenth century (see Figure 6.13).

6.2.24   *Relationship between the early great estates and the late-thirteenth-century deaneries*

There is no systematic evidence of how the dioceses were geographically divided until the c.1291 *Taxatio*, but it is highly probable that each diocese had a hierarchical structure long before the thirteenth century as discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2). The *Taxatio* in addition to recording the names of the churches to be taxed (see Section 4.2.7) also listed the archdeaconry and the deanery to which each church belonged.

Figure 6.13.   Archdeaconries as recorded in the c.1291 *Taxatio*

Bath Archdeaconry
Wells Archdeaconry
Taunton Archdeaconry

NOTE 1. Only the parishes stated in the *Taxatio* to be in each Archdeaconry are coloured.

NOTE 2. Bath Archdeaconry also included the Wells prebendal churches. These are not shown on the map.

Scales

miles
kilometres

N
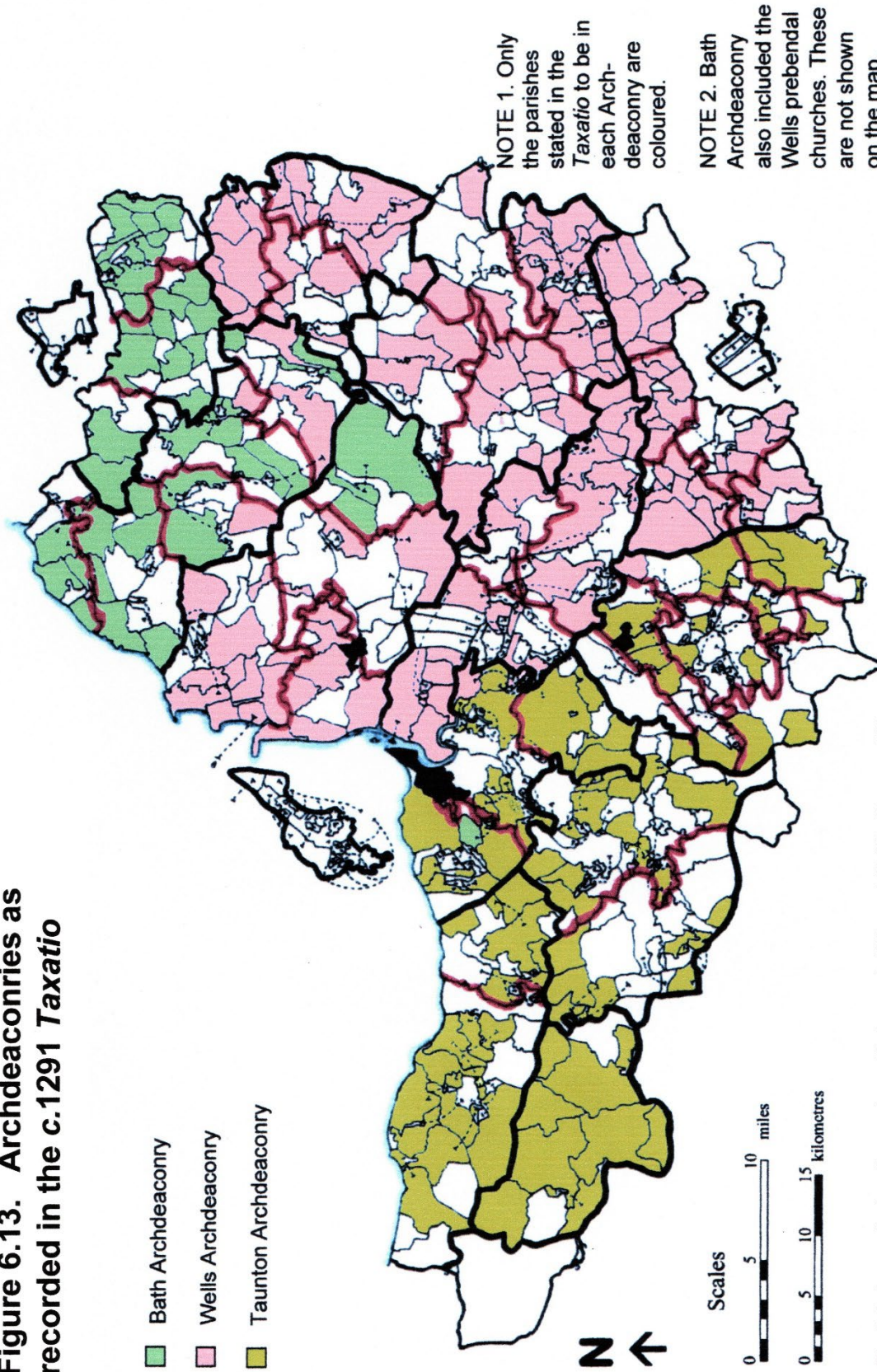
Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

There is evidence that archdeacons existed within dioceses prior to 1066 as for example, in ninth-century Canterbury (Brooke 1985, 2-3; see also Loyn 2000, 42-4, fn. 27; Blair 2005, 495-6). It seems likely that the bishop would have appointed the archdeacon(s), and therefore the deacons to oversee specific areas of the diocese; to administer welfare and charitable support within a specific area or for example, to have oversight of church properties (Brooke 1985, 3; see also Barlow 1979, 229, 247). The role of the first archdeacons would have been to oversee the deacons and to assist the bishops in administering the diocese (Brooke 1985, 3). By the twelfth century archdeacons regularly held synods and rural deans were in existence (Barlow 1979, 184; Kemp 1994, 344; 1995, 131). However, Barlow despite his extensive discussions about the roles of archdeacons and deacons, provides no information about them in relation to the three dioceses of Winchester (from 676), Sherborne (from 704/5) and Wells (from 909) under whose ecclesiastical jurisdiction the Church in Somerset was administered. The reason for this is because there is little pre-Conquest evidence for archdeacons and deacons (Loyn 2000, 43).

The thirteenth-century Bath Archdeaconry was divided into Bath, Redcliff, Wells, and Wells Cathedral Prebend Deaneries. The Wells Archdeaconry was divided into the Axbridge, Cary, Frome, Ilchester, Marston and Pawlett Deaneries, while the Taunton Archdeaconry was divided into the Bridgwater, Crewkerne, Dunster and Taunton Deaneries (Figure 6.14). It is highly unlikely that these were the original names for many of these deaneries because several places after which they are named only became significant after the thirteenth century such as Marston Deanery. This presumably took its name from Marston Magna which was a relatively insignificant place in 1066 when it was split between nine thanes (DB 19,72-3). Marston Magna church has not been identified as having any importance, although there is physical evidence that it was in existence in the eleventh or twelfth centuries (Orbach and Pevsner 2014, 425). However, in the 1334 Lay Subsidy return Marston Magna had a £30 valuation (Letters 2010) which was the highest within the *parochia* of Mudford.

Figure 6.14.   Great estates and *parochiae* with c.1291 deaneries as recorded in the *Taxatio*

Axbridge Deanery
Bath Deanery
Bridgwater Deanery
Cary Deanery
Crewkerne Deanery
Dunster Deanery

Frome Deanery
Ilchester Deanery
Marston Deanery
Pawlett Deanery
Redcliffe Deanery
Taunton Deanery

Wells Deanery

NOTE 1.
Only parishes stated in *Taxatio* to be in each deanery are coloured.

NOTE 2.
The Wells prebendal churches are not shown on the map.

Scales

0   5   10   miles

0   5   10   15   kilometres

Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

When the deanery information contained within the *Taxatio* is mapped against the early great estates a remarkably interesting correlation is immediately apparent. Each deanery is mainly contained within one of the early great estates as shown in Figure 6.14. The map looks incomplete because it does not include any church which was not taxed nor the churches located across Somerset, from Timberscombe in the early estate of Washford to Yeovil in the early estate of Yeo, which were within the Wells Cathedral Prebends Deanery (Greenway 1991, xxii-iii).

Churches belonging to the Cary and Crewkerne Deaneries appear to be completely contained within the early estates within which they sit. The Redcliffe Deanery, however, is contained within the early estates of Chew and Avon. What is interesting is that the Avon early estate also contains the Bath Deanery whose only member is the *parochia* of Bath. The Bath estate boundary is based on Aston (1986b) and Thorn (2009). The river Avon provides the estate boundary to the west dividing the Bath *parochia* from those of Keynsham and Wellow. Mercia held Bath and its estate until 918 AD and was therefore separate from the rest of Somerset which was held by Wessex (Aston 1986b, 76). Consequently, the Bath Deanery only contains the Bath *parochia* because prior to 918 AD it would have had no connection with any of the Somerset *parochiae*.

The churches held by some deaneries were not, however, totally confined within the area of one early estate such as Bridgwater, Dunster and Marston Deaneries. Over time, for a variety of reasons, changes would have been made to the churches within each deanery. For example, within the Dunster Deanery in the thirteenth century are Brompton Ralph, Huish Champflower and Clatworthy which are situated to the north of Wiveliscombe. However, they are all included in the Wiveliscombe *parochia* because of their topographical relationship with Wiveliscombe and would therefore have originally been in the same deanery as Wiveliscombe. It seems likely that when Wiveliscombe became a prebend, and therefore within the Wells Cathedral Prebend Deanery, that the boundary between the Dunster and Wiveliscombe Deaneries was redrawn, presumably for ease of administration, so that the Dunster Deanery

included Brompton Ralph, Huish Champflower and Clatworthy (see Figure 6.14).

In looking at the correlation between the early great estate boundaries and the *c.*1291 deaneries it seems highly probable that the original deanery boundaries, and therefore the organisation of the Church in Somerset, were established within the early great estate boundaries. Although it is not possible to state when the boundaries of those deaneries were originally defined it is, nevertheless, clear that this relationship between the early estate boundaries and the thirteenth-century deanery boundaries provides suggestive evidence as to how the early medieval Church developed.

6.3   CONCLUSION

It is clear that in Somerset there was a coherent pattern of early large *parochiae*. This echoes the view of Blair (1991, 103) that 'most of the English kingdoms had acquired a coherent system of *parochiae* by the early eighth century'. It appears that the geographical structure of the early medieval and the post-Conquest Church in Somerset was derived from the post-Roman early great estates. The extent to which these estates pre-date the post-Roman period is beyond the scope of this research but it appears they provided long standing territorial divisions across Somerset. Therefore, the post-Roman churches were established within the framework of these estates, as were the archdeaconries and deaneries.

Having established how the Church was organised across Somerset there are three key questions to be addressed. How can the development of the Church within each *parochia* be determined? Secondly, to what extent did the process vary between *parochiae*, and lastly, did the importance of individual churches change over time? These questions are addressed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT AND PHYSICAL SETTING OF CHURCHES

7.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers how churches relate to the natural landscapes around them and to nearby settlements since this evidence provides key information when there is a paucity of documentary, architectural and archaeological evidence. During the process of identifying Somerset's early medieval *parochiae* it became clear that there were distinct and tangible topographical differences between churches which could be related to their ecclesiastical and financial status. This enabled three distinct categories of churches to be identified:

- post-Roman;
- initial minsters founded by the Church which were geographically separate to nearby royal *villae*; and
- parochial minsters which were established within royal *villae.*

In some cases the pattern differed and a royal *villa* was established adjacent to a minster which may have originated as a post-Roman church site such as South Petherton, or a monastic site such as Cheddar. To ensure that the approach adopted is robust and could be used elsewhere in the South-West comparisons have been made with churches in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset which fall into these three categories. By using a systematic approach it is possible to identify when church sites were likely to have been established within each *parochia*. All the sites researched as case studies have been mapped; see Figure 7.1.

In the past churches have been identified as belonging to one or other of the above three categories. For example, Lamyatt Beacon has been identified as a post-Roman religious site (Leech 1986; Som. HER No. 23728), as has the site on Glastonbury Tor (Rahtz 1970; Som. HER No. 23603). Ilminster church was established by the monks of Muchelney Abbey (Aston 2009, 91-4) and it meets the criteria, established below (Section 7.3.2), used to identify an initial minster.

Crewkerne and Milborne Port churches are both sited within rectilinear royal *villae* sites and both are regarded as minsters or probable minsters (see Table 3.1; Figure 5.3). Both churches meet the criteria, established below (Section 7.3.3), constructed to identify parochial minsters.
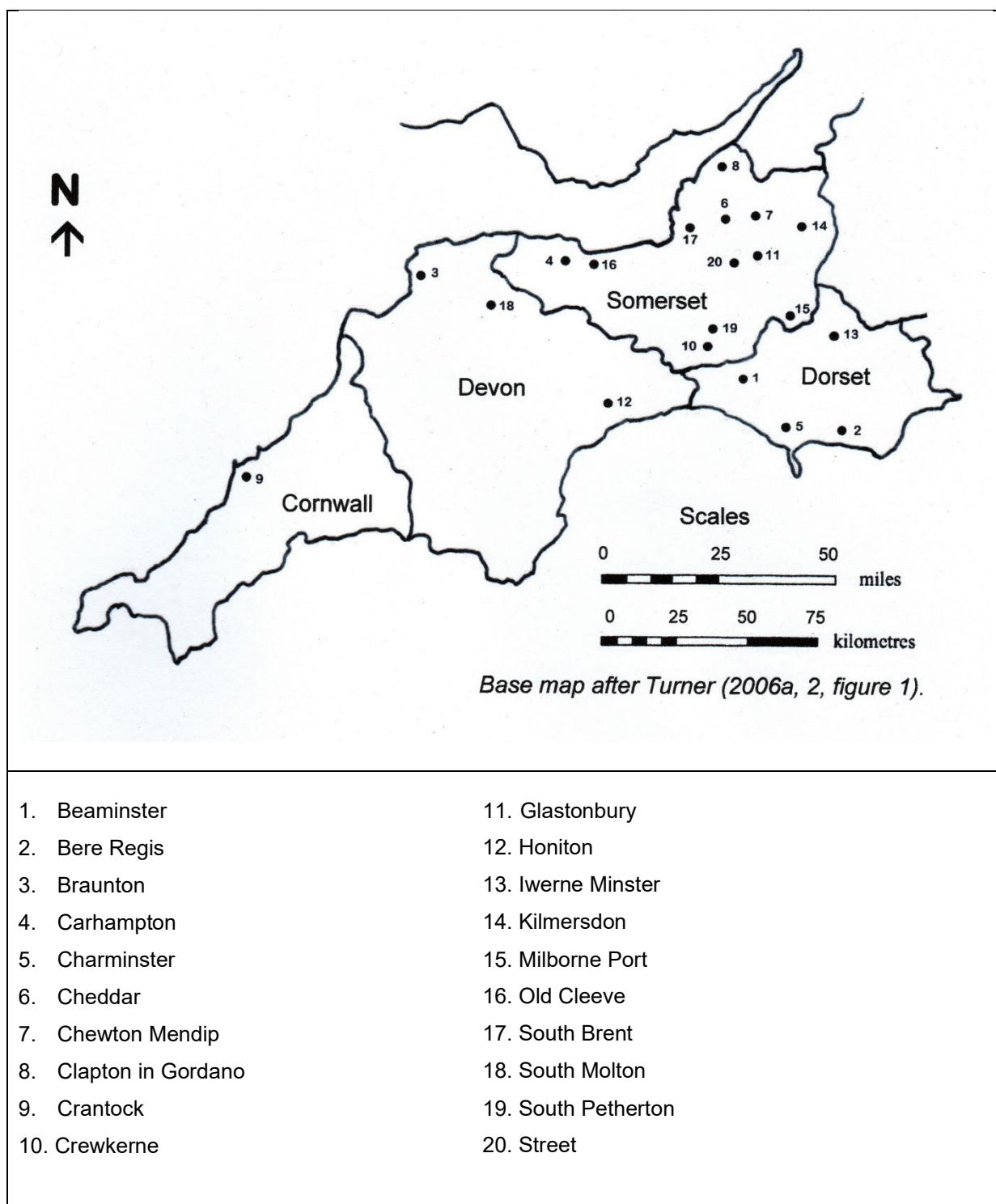

1. Beaminster	11. Glastonbury
2. Bere Regis	12. Honiton
3. Braunton	13. Iwerne Minster
4. Carhampton	14. Kilmersdon
5. Charminster	15. Milborne Port
6. Cheddar	16. Old Cleeve
7. Chewton Mendip	17. South Brent
8. Clapton in Gordano	18. South Molton
9. Crantock	19. South Petherton
10. Crewkerne	20. Street

Figure 7.1.   *Map of probable parochial minsters discussed as case studies in Chapter 7.*

Some churches have been identified by others as originating on the site of an early medieval monastery of which Cheddar is the most well-known example in Somerset, dating from *c*.880 to 920 AD (Blair 1996; Richardson 2003b, 7; Som. HER No. 11442). It is identified as both an initial minster and a parochial minster as it is adjacent to a tenth-century royal *villa*. However, Street church which has also been identified as an early monastic site (Calder 2004, 4-11; Som. HER No. 11588), is not associated with a royal *villa*.

Case studies of churches from across the South-West have been used to explore the characteristics of sites which fall into the above three categories and these strongly indicate that a morphological analysis of a church site, or the settlement around a church, cannot be used to identify when the site was first adopted as a religious focal point. However, morphological analysis does facilitate an understanding of the history of religious sites or settlements. The most significant physical evidence, given it exists for every church and is immutable, is its topographical setting because it is a good indicator of when a site was first chosen as a religious focal point. Currently no attempt has been made to identify the specific topographical, morphological and historical characteristics of churches in Somerset so that those characteristics could be used to categorise other churches. The aim of this chapter is to identify the topographical and morphological characteristics of post-Roman religious sites or churches, initial minsters and parochial minsters.

7.1.1 *Understanding the development of the Church in Somerset*

It has been argued that the post-Roman Church continued to function in Somerset into the seventh century (see Sections 1.1.2 and 1.3.1). The objective of the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD was to ensure the assimilation of the post-Roman Church in the South-West and elsewhere into the wider English Church (Hase 1994, 51-2; see also Cubitt 1995, 150; Blair 2005, 33).

There are many churches across Somerset which may be on post-Roman sites, in particular those sited on hills or high ground which look out across a river valley or low-lying wetlands. Whether they are or not is considered below. In the eastern half of the county there is the early religious site at Lamyatt Beacon which is within 2-3 miles of the royal *villa* of Bruton (location on Figure 5.1). Lamyatt Beacon illustrates

how, in the South-West, a sacred site could remain important within the landscape despite the religious allegiance of the local community transitioning from being pagan to being Christian (Pearce 2004, 112-3). The known sequence is that a Roman shrine, dedicated to the pagan gods of Mars, Minerva and Hercules, was established on the hill in the third century. Then in the fourth century a structure aligned east-west, and therefore possibly Christian, was built to the north of the temple. Also to the north was a cemetery containing sixteen graves, one of which has been dated to the sixth century and one to the eighth century (radio-carbon dates 559±90 and 782±90 uncalibrated AD; Leech 1986; Som. HER No. 23728). Despite the longevity of Lamyatt Beacon in providing a religious focus, it is important to remember that continuity of importance is not always related to a site being actively used (Moser and Feldman 2014b), as is probably true at Cannington (Costen 2011, 59-60; location on Figure 5.1). The post-Roman cemetery (Rahtz 1977; Som. HER No. 10503) on the hill above Cannington, continued in use until the seventh century. It has been proposed that there was a 'transfer of religious activity' from the hill-top cemetery to the site of the present church which is on a hillock in the surrounding low-lying wetlands (Costen 2011, 59-60). Unfortunately, the earliest stonework in St Mary's church, Cannington is a twelfth-century composite pier in the vestry and archaeological observation in 1998, while the church was being refloored, revealed no evidence of an earlier building (Som. HER Nos 10307 and 44711). However, we know that there was a church there in 1066/86 (*DB* 16,3).

As categorisation of the churches progressed it became clear that there is no single trajectory by which the development of the Church could be understood in Somerset. The pattern which emerged indicated that decisions must have been made for pragmatic, arbitrary and political reasons because there is such a range of different trajectories. Some churches identified as parochial minsters (this is discussed in Chapter 8) were sited close to or on Roman or post-Roman sites such as at Bath, South Brent and Milverton (Figure 7.2). It seems likely, but without new evidence it remains uncertain that other parochial minsters were initially established by the Church such as at Pilton and Kilmersdon, while others were established on new planned sites held by the royal family as at Milborne Port.

Figure 7.2.   *View of St Michael's church, Milverton, identified as on a post-Roman site, looking north-east from the Wellington to Milverton road (B3187) showing its prominent position in the landscape (author's photo).*

Whether the three categories of churches identified in Somerset can be recognised in other counties needs to be considered. It is clear that that there are regional differences in how the Church developed and these can only be revealed by more multi-disciplinary research (Hase 1994, 58; see Section 1.2). After assessing the topographical position of Somerset's churches any that appeared significant because of their topography have been assessed against the importance criteria used in Appendix 8. The approach adopted to understand the development of individual churches is outlined below.

7.2   APPROACH USED TO DEFINE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHURCHES

A structured assessment process was developed to investigate the topographical and landscape settings of key religious sites and churches. The purpose of these assessments is to determine whether there is a correlation between the importance

of a church in the early medieval period and its topographical setting within the landscape. An additional aim is to assess the morphological relationship between a church and any surrounding settlement.

It quickly became clear that the topographical setting of churches is key to understanding when a religious foundation was likely to have been established, but it is also clear that morphological evidence cannot be used to distinguish between churches established on post-Roman church sites, or as initial or parochial minsters. However, exploring the overall characteristics of these sites, including their morphology, does broaden our understanding, for example of churches sited within planned rectilinear road layouts, as the evidence indicates that these were churches regarded as important in the ninth and tenth centuries (Costen 2011, 165). Despite, the importance of topography in gauging when a church site was first adopted, it is important to recognise that 'purely topographical comparisons cannot, in the last analysis, give definitive explanations of function' (Blair 1996, 120). Using a comparative, systematic and inclusive approach has facilitated the categorisation of churches and, critically, has enabled the relationship between the three categories of religious foundations to be considered within each early medieval *parochia.*

In considering the topographical setting of a church the following questions are addressed:

- How is the church sited in relation to nearby areas of high ground; is it within a low-point or valley?
- How can the land around the church be described; does it form a bluff or promontory, or is the church site cut into the side of a hill?
- If it is on a hill, is it on the summit, or slightly downhill from the summit, or well down the slope of the hill?
- Is it on a local high point or hillock within an area of low-lying land;
- Is the church at approximately the same height above sea level as the surrounding landscape?
- Is the church sited in an elevated position above, or is it adjacent to, low-lying wetlands, springs, streams, rivers, or the sea (see Figures 7.3a and 7.3b)?

Figure 7.3a.   *View to the north from St Nicholas' church, Uphill which is on a prominent high point in the landscape; the sea can be seen in the upper left of the picture (author's photo).*

Figure 7.3b.   *Westward view from St Nicholas' church, Uphill towards the sea over low-lying land (author's photo).*

In considering the morphological setting of a church the following questions are addressed:

- Its relationship to nearby settlement; is it sited within or adjacent to settlement or is it an isolated element of the settlement landscape?

- If it is in a rural setting what is its relationship to any nearby farm or manor house?

- How does the road layout relate to both the church and any nearby settlement?

- Is it possible to identify whether originally there was a much larger enclosure around the church, and if so, what shape was it, and how did it relate to nearby settlement?

- How should the shape of the large enclosure around the church be described: is it curvilinear, irregular or rectilinear?

- How should the shape of its churchyard be described?

These topographical and morphological assessments of churches have been made using a variety of OS maps at different scales accessed through Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap). The initial morphological assessments are based on a visual interpretation of the relevant OS 1st Revision maps at 6" to the mile which date from the early twentieth century. It was decided to use these maps because they are easier to interpret than the OS 1st Edition maps. For some churches in very urban areas, notably Bedminster, it is

impossible to distinguish the contour lines and few spot heights can be distinguished. In these instances, OS maps dating from the 1970s have been accessed through Digimap as these usually contain more spot heights. The first step in preparing the morphology maps which illustrate the case studies discussed in this chapter is to trace the relevant area of an OS 1st Revision map. This is then amended to reflect earlier road layouts and boundaries as shown on maps included in the English Heritage Extensive Urban Surveys, the mid-nineteenth-century Tithe Maps, and if available, those on any pre-1840s maps (obtained from the relevant county archive).

Some churches have been physically assessed but the majority have not, and it is therefore impossible to ensure that the topographical analysis is completely correct. For example, some are on small hillocks such as Seavington St Michael church, and such subtle differences in the height of a site can rarely be identified even on OS nineteenth-century 6" to the mile maps. This is also true of some other features, such as whether the churchyard is raised as it is at Mark. For example, the OS map for Meare church indicates that it has a similar topography to Mark church, but no view can be reached about whether the churchyard is raised because it has not been visited. It was not feasible to visit and physically assess all the 426 churches and 257 chapels included in this research, however as the research progressed and the importance of certain churches became clear a visit was made to physically assess them. In addition, as the importance of churches on post-Roman sites became clear many were visited in order to understand how they were sited in relation to their topographical setting.

An appraisal of where churches are sited within the landscape and how they relate to nearby settlement is next considered. To facilitate this process a diagrammatic typology (Table 7.1) was constructed and this is used to assess how each church is sited within the landscape. The conclusion drawn from this process is that churches in Somerset vary in how they are sited within the landscape.

Table 7.1. *Diagrammatic typology of church sites developed for this thesis*

Topographical setting of churches - landscape								
Site on bluff	Promontory site	Site on top of hill	Site on slope just below top of hill or higher ground	Site on side of hill	Site on local high point within the landscape	Site on hillock within a settlement	Site surrounded by high ground	Flat site

Topographical setting of churches – sources of water								
Overlooks sea	Within 400 metres of sea	Overlooks river valley	High ground above stream, low-lying land or ponds	Close to stream, low-lying land or ponds	River or stream part of potential enclosure boundary	Stream runs through potential enclosure	Stream / spring or well within 5 metres of church	No water source close to church

Topographical setting of churches – relationship to late nineteenth–century settlement								
Completely within settlement with 1334 Lay Subsidy return of *c.*£30	Completely within lesser settlement	On edge of settlement with 1334 Lay Subsidy return of *c.*£30	On edge of lesser settlement	Within or at end of 'row plan settlement'	Rural setting near to settlement	Rural setting near to another ecclesiasti-cal site	Rural setting near to manor / farm house	Isolated setting

Topographical setting of churches – shape of potential enclosure								
Rectilinear enclosure completely integrated into road network	Rectilinear enclosure partially integrated into road network	Rectilinear enclosure butts up to road network	Curvilinear or partially curvilinear enclosure	Linear organically shaped enclosure	Rectilinear or largely rectilinear churchyard	Irregularly shaped churchyard	Curvilinear or partially curvilinear churchyard	Churchyard small and larger enclosure cannot be determined

7.2.1 *Topography – how churches are sited within the landscape*

It is accepted that the choice of a site for a monastery, or a monastic cell, was influenced by its natural topography which helped to delineate its site and provide seclusion from the everyday world (Aston 2000a, 29-31, 57). This might be because it was an island surrounded by the sea, or by the confluence of two rivers, or by wetlands as exist in Somerset (see Morris 1989, 110). The monastic concept of liminality, the need to be separate from, or on the edge of secular life, was a prime driving force in the lives of the religious. It was a key factor in choosing where early monasteries and their attached monastic cells would be sited (Aston 2000a, 29-30). Prime Somerset examples of the liminality of monastic settlements are the abbeys at Athelney, Glastonbury and Muchelney which are all sited within the central low-lying wetlands of the Somerset Levels. Peninsulas, promontories and coastal headlands

in Somerset also provide a degree of isolation, they are strongly defined by their topography and are also possible sites for monastic hermitages (Aston 2003, 39-40; see also Morris 1989, 110).

There are several churches in Somerset whose topographical setting is quite striking, for example Kewstoke at *c.*27 metres above sea level on a coastal headland with the land to the north dropping steeply to low-lying wetlands behind the beach (5-6 metres). Uphill church, to the south of Kewstoke, is also on a coastal promontory (40.98 metres) and to the west of the building the land drops dramatically down to the beach (Figures 7.3a and 7.3b). It is impossible to determine whether these two churches, and indeed many others, were established by missionaries, or originated as outlying monastic hermitages, or founded as monasteries which did not thrive (Morris 1989, 119; Aston 2003, 45-6). There are other churches on coastal headlands which might also have originally been established as outlying monastic cells (Aston 2003, 39-40). For example, on the western side of Somerset overlooking the sea is Minehead church. While to the east on Brean Down is a Roman temple with post-Roman graves (ApSimon 1965; Som. HER No. 10117) and further north there is Clevedon. There are also churches which are on hills or bluffs which are less than 400 metres from the sea but not on the coast such as Culbone or South Brent [Brent Knoll]. The latter is of note because Aston (2003, 38-41) highlights it as a possible 'island' hermitage site. If these churches were founded as monastic cells because of their liminality then the likelihood is that the cells were founded before *c.*680 AD (Morris 1989, 123; see also Calder 2004, 22 and Pearce 2004, 169-71). An associated issue that needs to be acknowledged is the extent to which the relationship between these sites and the coastline might have changed since they were adopted. For example, compared to when it was first established Culbone church is now close to the sea cliff due to land slips. Understanding and taking account of these coastal changes is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis.

Hill-top churches, or churches on knolls in the middle of a relatively flat landscape also stand out in Somerset. Mick Aston (2003, 38-40; see also Morris 1989, 111) discusses hill-tops as being possible sites for hermitages and suggests a number across Somerset including Dundon on which a hill-fort had been constructed (Som. HER No. 53760). Key examples are Langford Budville church (discussed in Chapter

6; see Figure 6.5) and Aller church where Guthrum, king of the Danes, was baptised in 878 AD after his defeat by King Alfred (Swanton 1997, 76). Whether or not churches on hill-tops or knolls in Somerset have early origins is considered below.

There are notable examples of churches in Somerset which were established on sloping hillsides; a steeply sloping hillside in the case of Frome which was established by St Aldhelm when he was Bishop of Sherborne (705–9 AD; Foyle and Pevsner 2011, 506). Other examples of churches on sloping sites are Bruton, Ilminster, Milverton and South Petherton (their location can be seen in Figure 5.1), the latter two are also situated on promontories. It is of note that frequently churches overlook streams or rivers, for example Winsford and Dowlish Wake, both of which are on promontory sites.

Churches on hills or bluffs close to the coast which might have originated as monastic cells have already been mentioned, however there are several churches in a similar relationship to the coast which are on flattish areas of land, for example Carhampton (Figures 7.4a and 7.4b) which is discussed below. Other churches are frequently to be found on low-lying land close to rivers and Hase (1994, 58) identifies these as being early mother-churches established by the 'West Saxons'. There are several important churches in Somerset which are on flat sites close to a river, notably Taunton. Other important settlements are to be found in valleys or low-points within the landscape close to streams or rivers which are surrounded on at least three sides by higher ground. A good example is the town of South Petherton, but its church is sited on a high point (41.7 metres) above the lowest part of the town (*c.*33 metres; Figures 7.5a and 7.5b). In summary, churches in Somerset are sited in a variety of topographical locations.

7.2.2   *Morphology – where churches are sited in relation to nearby settlement*

A major breakthrough in understanding how settlements developed and changed over time was the publication by Brian Roberts (1987) of his seminal work on English villages. By using all the maps available for a village he was able to reconstruct its evolution over time and therefore understand its morphology.

Figure 7.4a. *Map showing geographical setting of Carhampton: 1:50,000 Colour Raster map, Ordnance Survey, UK, published March 2019.*
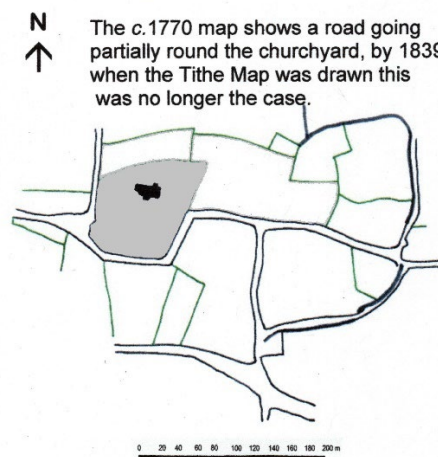
Figure 7.4b. *Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Carhampton based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1903, Landmark Information Group, Carhampton Tithe Map dated 1839 and c.1770 map (DD/L/1/40/26/1).*

Figure 7.5a. *Map showing geographical setting of South Petherton: 1:50,000 Colour Raster map, Ordnance Survey, UK, published March 2019.*
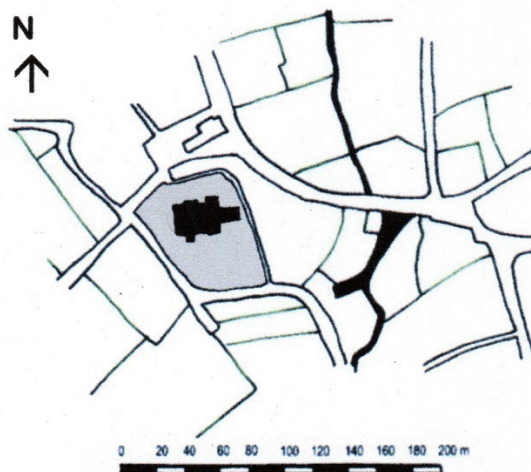
Figure 7.5b. *Map depicting the settlement morphology of South Petherton based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK and South Petherton Tithe Map dated 1840; no earlier maps located*

Base maps downloaded [August 2019] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

The importance of understanding how settlements developed is shown by the historical and landscape archaeological research carried out into the development of

Shapwick, which was previously thought to have been a post-Conquest planned village. However, the evidence showed that 'some of the east-west lanes had existed *before* the village came into being' and that there had been an earlier ninth or tenth-century planned settlement (Gerrard and Aston 2007, 171-7).

Historical research in Dorset has shown that the settlement pattern around a church can be used to understand whether it was an early medieval minster (Hall 2000, 76-8, 83-4). Therefore, the morphological assessment of Somerset's churches takes account of the shape of the likely early church enclosures or precincts, and the street pattern around the enclosures.

An initial assessment of churches which others have identified as Somerset minsters (see Table 3.1 and Figure 5.1 for the location of the churches mentioned below) shows that they are to be found in a variety of morphological settings and therefore that each church needs to be assessed on its individual morphology. Both Crewkerne (Figures 5.3 and 7.6) and Milborne Port churches (Figure 5.3) are within rectilinear street layouts (Hall 2003, 53; Costen 2011, 165) and Congresbury has a similar layout (Costen 2011, 165), but Carhampton, Cheddar and Chewton Mendip are not in rectilinear layouts. Milborne Port and Crewkerne churches are in an urban setting, but Carhampton, Cheddar and Chewton Mendip, the latter on a hill overlooking the settlement, are sited outside of their associated settlements. Michael Costen (2011, 165) has stated that the siting of Milborne Port church at the end of a promontory above a stream is typically late 'Anglo-Saxon'. He has also suggested that the church may have been founded first and then the town developed around it (Costen 2011, 165). The rectilinear enclosure at Milborne Port slopes southwards from the church, which is on a high point (83.34 metres), towards the stream (*c.*76 metres). This combination of a church at the top of a slope within a rectilinear enclosure is seen elsewhere, for example at Milverton and Yeovil. Figure 5.3 shows the rectilinear enclosures around Crewkerne, Milborne Port, Milverton and Yeovil churches and shows very clearly the variation in size and shape of these enclosures which is indicative of their haphazard and pragmatic development.
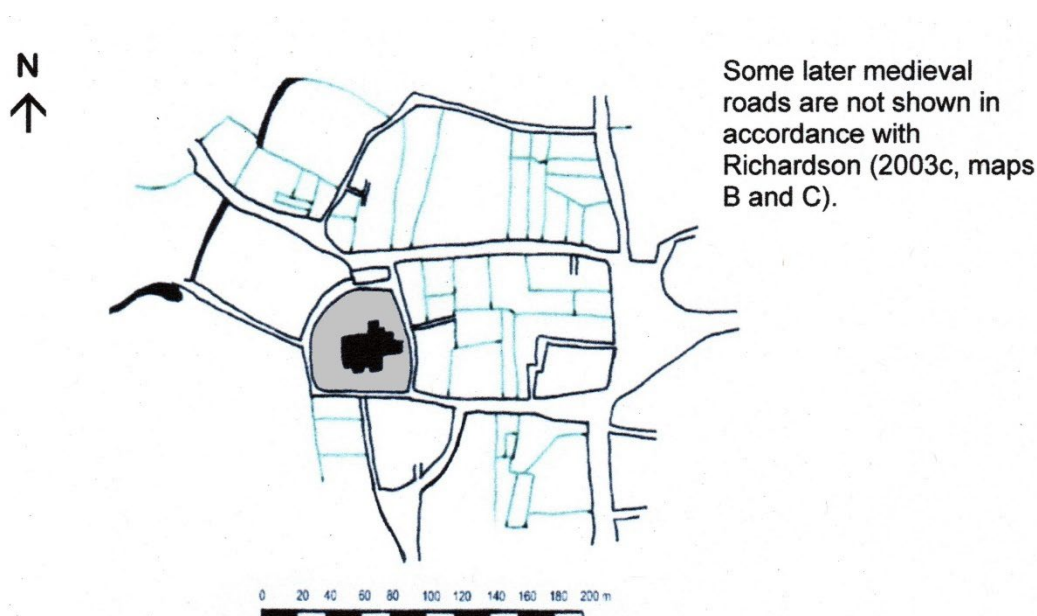
Figure 7.6.   *Map depicting the settlement morphology of Crewkerne based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1903, Landmark Information Group, UK and Crewkerne Tithe Map dated 1844, plus maps B and C (Richardson 2003c) based on earlier maps. See also Figure 5.3.*

Map downloaded [August 2019] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

It has been suggested that Carhampton had monastic origins, as it has a curvilinear churchyard, is close to an early Christian and medieval cemetery and is a likely high status fifth or sixth-century defended site (Aston 2003, 38-9; Som. HER No. 33449). There are other curvilinear churchyards near the Somerset coast as at Porlock (Aston 2003, 38-9). Inland there are churches on flattish land within large curvilinear enclosures which are thought to have been monastic, for example Street (Figures 7.7a and 7.7b; Aston 2003, 38-9; Calder 2004, 4-11; Som. HER No. 11588).

There has been considerable debate as to the likelihood that early monastic sites could be identified as forerunners to churches set within curvilinear enclosures and, after reviewing the evidence, Michael Calder (2004, 3) concluded that some curvilinear churchyards may date from the fifth or sixth century. However, it is impossible to know if they were originally enclosed burial grounds or indeed when they were established and by whom. Therefore a curvilinear churchyard, without additional evidence, cannot be deemed to indicate a post-Roman monastery or

church (Calder 2004, 3). Susan Pearce (2004, 183; 2012, 100) has provided a good summary of the debate about curvilinear churchyards, particularly around minster churches in Devon and Dorset, and concluded that for individual sites it cannot be assumed that 'their morphological features can be taken as secure, given the potential for change' (Pearce 2012, 100).
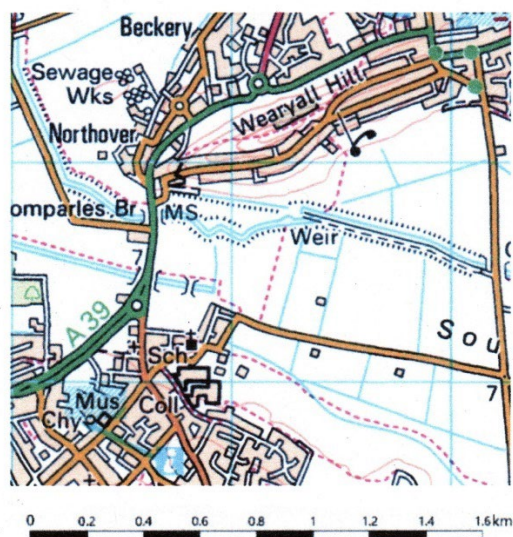

Figure 7.7a. *Map showing geographical setting of Street: 1:50,000 Colour Raster map, Ordnance Survey, UK, published March 2019.*
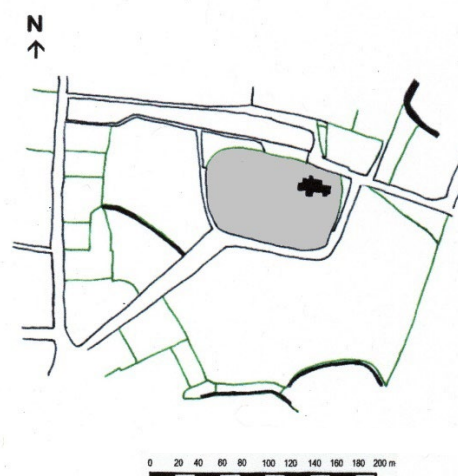
Figure 7.7b. *Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Street based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK and Street Tithe Map dated 1840; no earlier maps located.*

Maps downloaded [March 2021] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

Research in Dorset revealed that some minsters are sited within rectilinear road networks, for example Charminster, Iwerne Minster and Wimborne Minster (Hall 2000, 64-7, 76). However, it is important to note that none of the criteria which Theresa Hall (2000, 2, 7) used to initially identify the high-status churches in Dorset related to the settlement pattern around them. Despite this she found a 'high degree of rectilinear planning' (Hall, 2000, 83-4; see also Hase 1994, 58; Costen 2011, 196) and concluded that around the early medieval minsters in Dorset there is a distinctive rectilinear pattern of urban morphology. Critically, she also concluded that churches situated within rectilinear enclosures are likely to be a later development replacing earlier post-Roman monasteries or churches (Hall 2000, 83; 2003; see

also Hase 1994, 50-1; Aston 2003, 43-4; Calder 2004, 24-5; Hall 2009). The evidence suggests that this interpretation holds true for both Cannington and Crewkerne. However, Pearce (2004, 183) makes the very pertinent comment that it is almost impossible to date these rectilinear layouts because they could date from the foundation of the site or represent a remodelling of the settlement for defensive or trading reasons.

Clearly, assessing where churches are located within settlements provides valuable evidence, but as already stated, morphological evidence cannot be interpreted as being conclusive on its own. It needs to be considered as part of a wider assessment because of the of the extent to which the structure of settlements varies (Aston 1985; Blair 2005, 395). However, it is clear that chronological distinctions can be made between different settlement patterns. For example, John Blair (2005, 395) concluded that the row-plan villages in Surrey, where there are deliberately planned house plots along a street with a larger plot being allocated for a church, were relatively late as there is no archaeological evidence to date them before 1050.   It is important to note this since Wellington is a good example of a settlement laid out with a regular pattern of house-plots along the main street with Wellington church sited on a plot which is larger than the others although in the nineteenth century it was at the end of the row (Figure 7.8; Gathercole 2003c, 4). In 1066 Wellington was held by the bishop of Wells (*DB* 6,7) but there is no substantive evidence as to when the estate was granted to him (Costen 2011, 214-5). There are clear indications that the church at West Buckland, which was within the manor of Wellington in 1066 (Gathercole 2003c, 4), is on a post-Roman site (see Figure 4.7). It is therefore quite possible that in the eleventh century it was superseded when the bishop built a new church to serve the planned settlement of Wellington, as can be seen in Figure 7.8 the settlement layout is different to that around many other churches. There are other late planned settlements in Somerset and frequently these became commercially successful. A good example is Castle Cary (Richardson 2003a, 7) which in 1086 was held by Walter of Douai (*DB* 24,17) and had a Lay Subsidy Return in 1334 of £135 (Letters 2010).
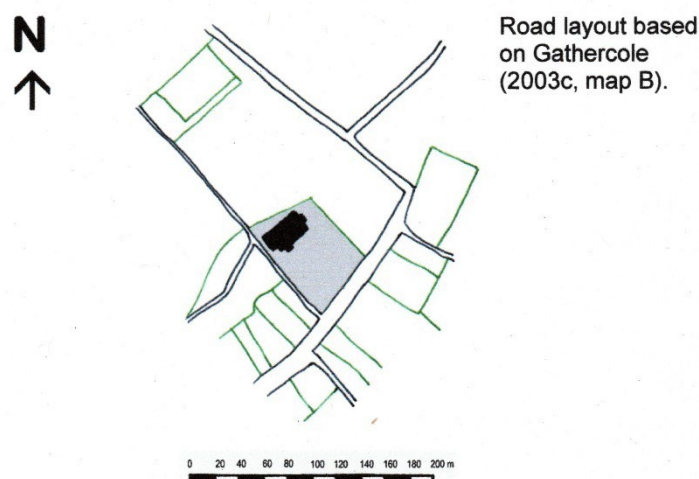
Figure 7.8.   *Map depicting the settlement morphology of Wellington based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK and Wellington Tithe Map dated 1839, plus map B (Gathercole 2003c); no earlier maps located.*
Map downloaded from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

It can therefore be argued that the morphological setting of a church, and how it relates to its neighbouring settlement, is valid evidence when constructing a hierarchy of Church development.

Recently Pearce (2012, 81) considered the historical, topographical and morphological characteristics of early medieval burial sites across the South-West and concluded by discussing the slow and complex transition in the South-West from pagan to Christian belief. In her view evidence derived from church dedications, lives of the saints, place-names and the morphology of church sites must be regarded as being fluid and not stable and so needs to be treated with caution. Consequently, Pearce (2012, 104) highlights the importance of using topographical evidence and the need to be aware of how settlements developed over time.

It is therefore clear that neither topographical evidence, nor morphological and settlement evidence, or even historical evidence can be used in isolation to understand how the Church developed. This can only be achieved by taking account of all the available data, including the topographical and morphological characteristics of churches. These are considered below. The historical

characteristics of churches and the identification of those which were parochial minsters are considered in Chapter 8.

7.3   TOPOGRAPHICAL AND MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHURCHES IN SOMERSET

Systematically assessing Somerset's churches enables a view to be reached about when individual sites appear to have been chosen to provide a religious focal point within the landscape. This in turn enables the physical characteristics of post-Roman religious sites, initial and parochial minster sites to be identified. All the churches in Somerset likely to have significance have been assessed against the characteristics detailed in the diagrammatic typology (Table 7.1). The assessment of Somerset's churches is given in Appendix 9. A summary of the physical characteristics for each category of religious site is given below.

The assessment of churches in Somerset, and of a limited number from elsewhere in the South-West, showed very clearly that morphology can be used to understand the history of a church. However, it cannot identify when a church was first established on a specific site.

7.3.1   *Churches identified as post-Roman*

A total of 123 churches are identified as post-Roman with another 33 churches identified as being possibly post-Roman. These churches are found in a variety of prominent topographical settings:

- on sites which appear to have been cut into the side of a hill to form a platform overlooking a river or the sea, for example Frome and Minehead;
- on the summits of hills, or just below the summit, for example Aller and Uphill;
- on bluffs or promontories, for example Winsford and Chard;
- on high points in the landscape, including hillocks in low-lying areas, for example Milverton (Figure 7.9) and North Cadbury; and
- sometimes on the side of a hill in a prominent position, for example Timberscombe and Penselwood.

The morphological characteristics identified in relation to these churches are given below, although, none of them can be regarded as definitive.

The most striking characteristic of these sites is that 38 (*c.*31%) of the churches identified as post-Roman are strongly associated with a farm which was sometimes situated within what was possibly the original enclosure, for example Ilton (Figures 4.5 and 7.10). The indications are that Ilton is an early church since it is on the top of a local high point (see Figure 4.5; Ellison 1983, 43-4). In addition, another 10 possible post-Roman churches had a farm associated with them, equating to *c.*30%. Whether these farms originally formed part of the post-Roman church site is impossible to say. Five post-Roman churches have been identified as being within a rectilinear enclosure completely integrated into the road network. These are Henstridge, Kingsbrompton [Brompton Regis], Middlezoy, Milverton and Shepton Beauchamp. There are other churches, for example Pilton which are also within a rectilinear enclosure but the enclosures are not fully integrated into the road network.

Figure 7.9.   Map showing geographical setting of Milverton: 1:50,000, OS Colour Raster map, Ordnance Survey, UK, published March 2019; for morphological map see Figure 5.3.
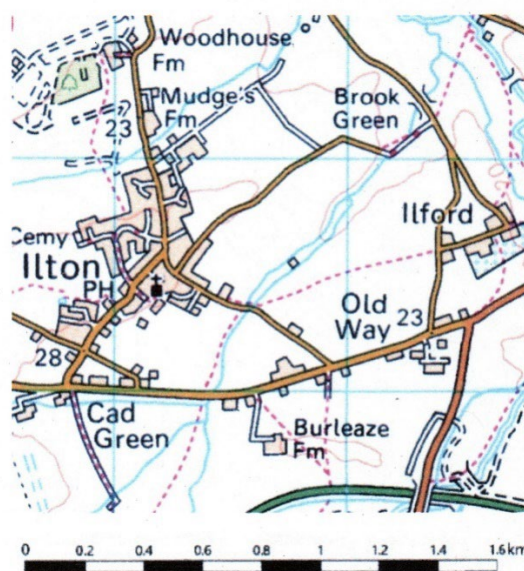
Figure 7.10.   Map showing geographical setting of Ilton: 1:50,000, OS Colour Raster map, Ordnance Survey, UK, published December 2019; for morphological map see Figure 4.5.

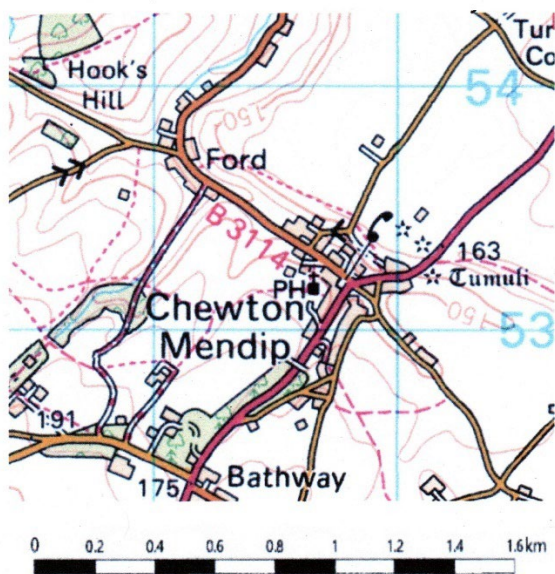Map (Figure 7.9) downloaded [August 2019] and map (Figure 7.10) downloaded [April 2021] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

Figure 7.11a. *Map showing geographical setting of Chewton Mendip: 1:50,000 Colour Raster map, Ordnance Survey, UK, published December 2019.*
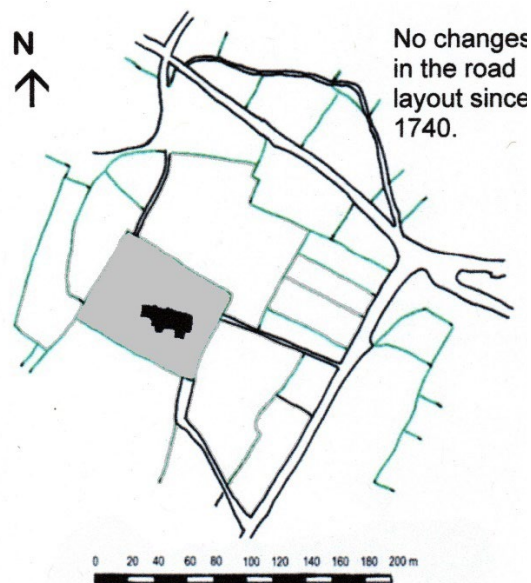
Figure 7.11b. *Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Chewton Mendip based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK, Chewton Tithe Map dated 1839 and maps drawn in 1740 (DD/WG/MAP/1) and 1807 (DD/WG/MAP/16).*

Figure 7.12a. *Map showing geographical setting of Curry Rivel: 1:50,000 Colour Raster map, Ordnance Survey, UK, published December 2019.*
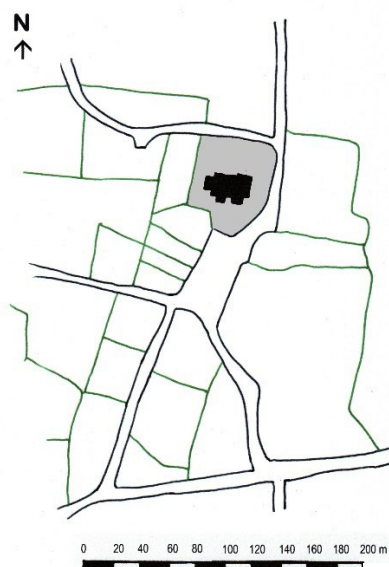
Figure 7.12b. *Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Curry Rivel based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1903, Landmark Information Group, UK and Curry Rivel Tithe Map c.1840; no earlier maps located.*

Maps downloaded [April 2021] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

Many post-Roman or possible post-Roman churches are within curvilinear or partially curvilinear enclosures and there are roads curving, at least partially, around 24 of these enclosures, for example Kingsbrompton. Another 32 churches are within curvilinear or partially curvilinear enclosures without a road curving round them, for example Chewton Mendip (Figures 7.11a and 7.11b above). Other churches are within irregular or longitudinal enclosures, for example Curry Rivel (Figures 7.12a and 7.12b above). Seventy-three of the post-Roman or possible post-Roman churches are within rectilinear churchyards, sometimes within a curvilinear enclosure, for example Chewton Mendip, while 49 are within curvilinear, partially curvilinear, irregular or small churchyards.

7.3.2 *Initial minsters*

Initial minsters are churches which have been identified as being relatively close to a royal *villa* but not within it or adjacent to it. This research has shown that they are to be found on the types of site listed below unless they were originally founded as post-Roman churches, for example Litton (Figure 7.13) and West Buckland (Figure 7.14). Initial minsters were established, after Wessex took control of Somerset, probably in the mid-seventh century (Costen 2011, 25-7). These churches are sited:

- primarily relatively low down on the side of hills which slope down to a stream or river valley, where the church itself is frequently part way down the slope of the hill, for example Ilminster (Figures 7.15a and 7.15b) and Wiveliscombe (Figures 7.16a and 7.16b);
- many of these are also sited within a valley or low-point within the landscape, for example Kilmersdon and Stogursey;
- a limited number are associated with a localised high-point within the landscape, for example Huish Episcopi and Kingsbury Episcopi.
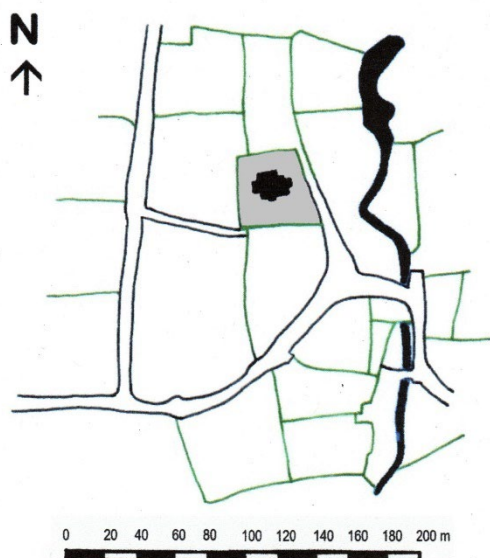
Figure 7.13. *Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Litton based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1903, Landmark Information Group, UK and Litton Tithe Map c.1840; no earlier maps located.*

Figure 7.14. *Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of West Buckland based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK and West Buckland Tithe Map c.1840 and map drawn in 1815 (D/P/w.bu/20/1/1).*

Figure 7.15a. *Map showing geographical setting of Ilminster: 1:50,000, OS Colour Raster map [geospatial data], Ordnance Survey, UK, published March 2019.*

Figure 7.15b. *Map depicting the settlement morphology of Ilminster based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1903, Landmark Information Group, UK, Ilminster Tithe Map c.1840 and maps drawn in 1768 (DD/CA/165) and 1821(DD/CA/335).*

Maps downloaded [April 2021] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

Figure 7.16a.   Map showing geographical setting of Wiveliscombe: 1:50,000, OS Colour Raster map, Ordnance Survey, UK, published March 2019.
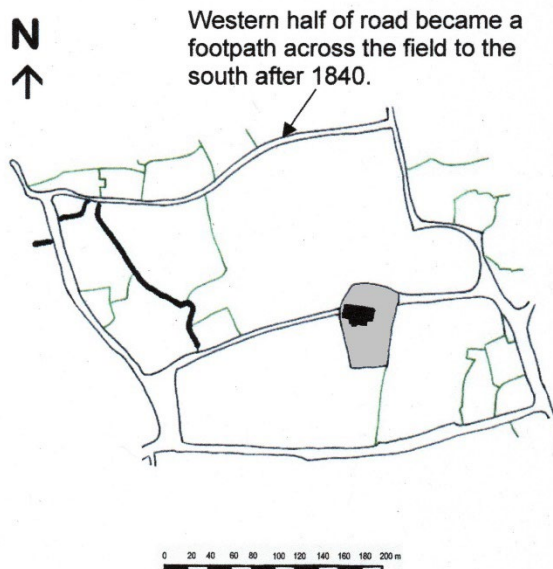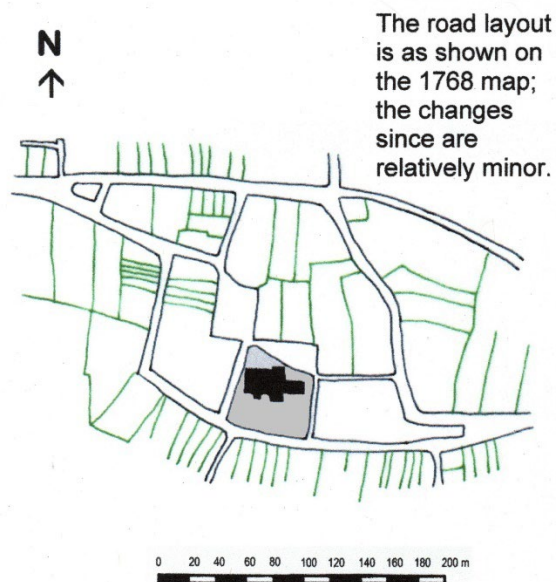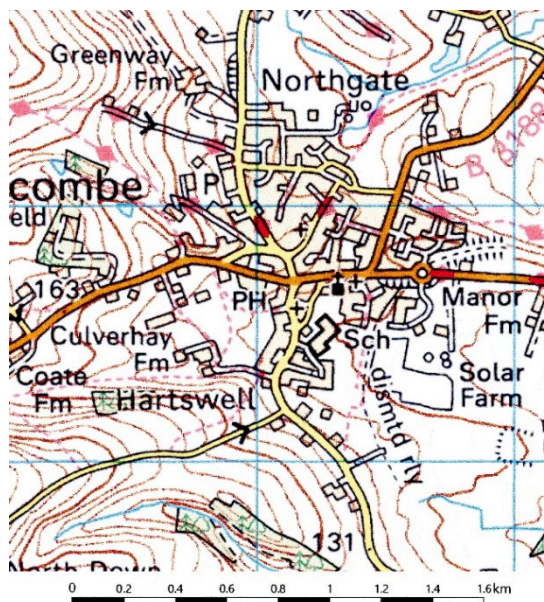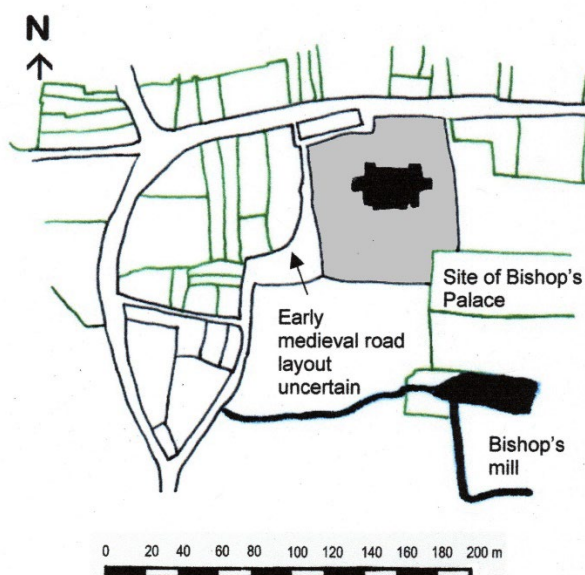
Figure 7.16b.   Map depicting the settlement morphology of Wiveliscombe based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1900, Landmark Information Group, UK and c.1840 Wiveliscombe Tithe Map and map 69 (Aston and Leech, 1977).

Maps downloaded [August 2019 and April 2021] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

The morphological characteristics for the 58 churches identified as being initial or possible initial minster churches are that:

- eighteen are close to a farm, but it is impossible to say whether these farms were originally established when the site was adopted as a religious focal point, but the correlation may be significant. Ten of these sites have been identified as originating as post-Roman sites, for example Litton, plus one originating as a possible post-Roman site. Four possible initial minsters are close to a farm but none of these is identified as having post-Roman origins;

- the enclosure around most initial minsters cannot be determined, but 14 are within a curvilinear, partially curvilinear or a longitudinal enclosure, for example Litton. An additional seven are possibly within a curvilinear or partially curvilinear enclosure; 24 of the 58 churches (*c.* 41%) are within a curvilinear, partially curvilinear or irregular churchyard, for example West Buckland.

7.3.3 *Churches identified as being within royal villae*

In completing this assessment it became clear that churches identified as being within royal *villae*, and therefore likely to be parochial minsters, had a variety of topographical or morphological characteristics. Some met the topographical characteristics of church sites identified as being post-Roman, for example Frome, North Cadbury, Wellow and Winsford. The site of Stogursey church (*c.*30 metres above sea level) meets the characteristics of a site which originated as an initial minster and adjacent to it is the site of a possible royal *villa* based on its topography since it is within a narrow valley with the hills to the north-east, east and south rising to *c.*63 metres. Other churches identified as being within, or adjacent to, a royal *villa* are sited within apparently planned rectilinear enclosures, for example Crewkerne, Milverton and Taunton. It is therefore clear that there is no one trajectory which led to the establishment of churches within royal *villae* across Somerset, but rather a range of trajectories.

The topographical characteristics of churches within royal *villae* which have not been identified as originating as either post-Roman churches or initial minsters are to be found on the types of site listed below:

- many are sited within in valley, for example Bedminster and Kilmersdon;
- some are sited on a slight slope, for example Crewkerne and Milborne Port; and
- some are on a slight highpoint within a flat area, for example Keynsham and Wrington, while others are on a flat site near a river, for example Taunton and Martock.

It is notable that some parochial minsters are found on flat ground near rivers or streams. It is therefore important to state that the above categorisation of churches is additionally based on historical evidence. This is discussed in Chapter 8. Specific Somerset examples of the three categories of sites are discussed below together with comparative examples drawn from across the South-West. Some of the Somerset examples are then explored further in Chapter 8 by broadening the evidence to include historical data.

7.3.4 *Case studies*

The case studies discussed below have been chosen to illustrate the topographical and morphological characteristics of the three categories of church sites that have been identified: post-Roman religious sites, initial minsters, and parochial minsters. The characteristics for each category are explored by considering several churches, at least two from Somerset and two from elsewhere in the South-West chosen because they have similar characteristics to the Somerset churches which have been used as case studies. A full assessment of churches in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset has not been completed and therefore it should not be assumed that the case study churches in these counties are generally representative. However, the churches chosen from elsewhere in the South-West are all considered to be important early medieval foundations, and some have been described as minsters (Hall 2000; Pearce 2004; Turner 2006a; Higham 2008). All the churches discussed below have been visited.

The base maps, amended in some cases as detailed below, used to illustrate these case studies are derived from the 1900s revised editions of the 1st Edition OS maps. This means that the maps can easily be compared, except those for Glastonbury, South Molton and Taunton which are at 1:5000 rather than the 1:2500 scale which is used for the other maps. The maps showing the morphology of settlements have been amended to reflect the main boundaries, but not all the individual house plot boundaries, shown on the Tithe Maps dating from *c.*1840 or where available on any pre-1840s maps. In many cases no maps earlier than the 1840s could be located. When earlier maps have been located they rarely showed that the *c.*1840s road layout needed to be amended but frequently changes have been made to plot boundaries. Where a morphology map was amended to correlate to a pre-1840s map that information is noted on the map. The information included in the tables for the Somerset churches is derived from Appendix 9.

7.3.5 *Comparing the topographical and morphological setting of post-Roman church sites*

It is important to place the evidence for Somerset's post-Roman churches into a wider context and consider what evidence exists for post-Roman churches across

the South-West, particularly whether any can be identified as later serving as early medieval minsters. In Devon fewer minster churches have been identified than might have been expected (Higham 2008, 95-7). This is probably because the criteria used was derived from the characteristics of a limited number of churches identified by other researchers as minsters as, for example Crewkerne and Taunton in Somerset. This research has identified, as discussed above, that minsters are to be found in a variety of settings and with a range of characteristics. Consequently, one reason that few Devon minsters have been identified is that it is likely that many originated as post-Roman [*Dumnonian*] churches and therefore their topographical setting and characteristics are quite different from those of Crewkerne and Taunton (Higham 2008, 95).

Four churches identified as being on post-Roman sites are evaluated Clapton in Gordano (Figure 7.17) and Old Cleeve (Figure 7.18) in Somerset, Crantock (Figure 7.19) in Cornwall and Honiton St Michael (Figure 7.20) in Devon. South Petherton (Figures 7.5a and 7.5b) in Somerset which is identified as a possible post-Roman church is also considered. Table 7.2 shows the key information about each church.

All these churches are sited on prominent high points in the landscape overlooking valleys in which the nearest settlement is located, as for example at Honiton, Devon. None of them have a farm associated with them. The enclosure around four of the churches cannot be identified, although the enclosure around Crantock was probably rectilinear. South Petherton church is in a curvilinear enclosure around which the road curves. One church has a rectilinear churchyard and two a rectilinear / irregular churchyard. The other two churches, including South Petherton, have curvilinear / irregular or linear churchyards. Two churches, Clapton in Gordano and Honiton, are isolated from the main settlement with which they are associated (Figures 7.17 and 7.20). Crantock church abuts an adjacent area of settlement but is not close to the intersection of key roads into it (Figure 7.19). Old Cleeve church, identified as being on a post-Roman site, is adjacent to the nearby settlement and close to the intersection of four roads (Figure 7.18). South Petherton church was in the centre of South Petherton in the early twentieth century despite being on a hill, although the main part of the town is on lower ground to the east of the building (Figures 7.5a and 7.5b).

The road layout on the southern
boundary of the churchyard is as
shown on the 1806 map, it was
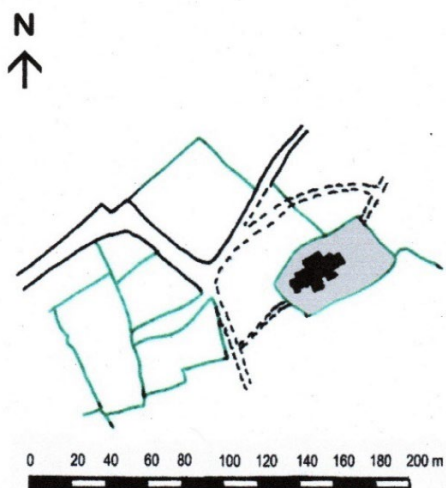later changed.

Figure 7.17.   Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Clapton in Gordano based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1903, Landmark Information Group, UK and Clapton in Gordano Tithe Map dated 1838; no earlier maps located.
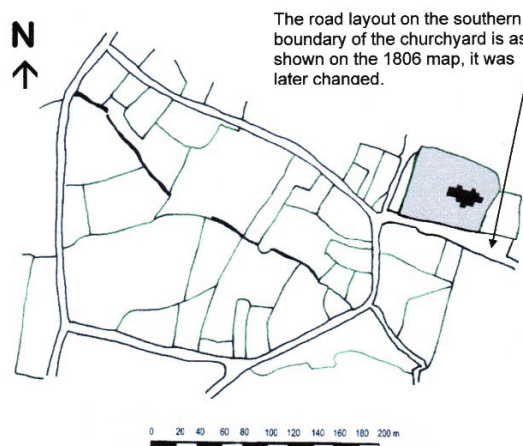
Figure 7.18.   Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Old Cleeve based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK, Old Cleeve Tithe Map dated 1839 and 1806 map (DD/L/248M).
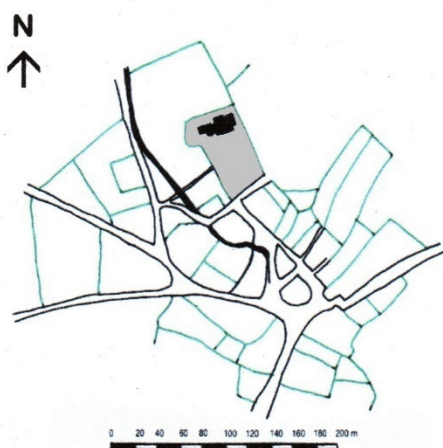
Figure 7.19.   Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Crantock, Cornwall based on 1:2500 OS Cornwall County Series 1st Revision 1905-7, published 1907, Landmark Information Group, UK and Crantock Tithe Map dated 1839; no earlier maps located.
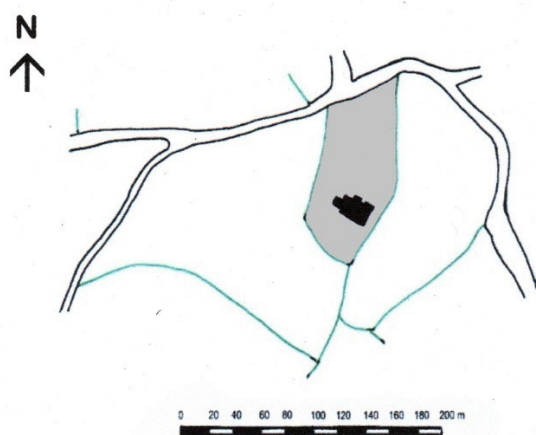
Figure 7.20.   Map depicting the field morphology of Honiton, Devon based on 1:2500 OS Devon County Series 1st Revision 1902-5, published 1905, Landmark Information Group, UK and Honiton Tithe Map dated 1843; no earlier maps located.

Maps downloaded [August 2019] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

Of the five churches detailed in Table 7.2 it is only the parochial minster of South Petherton which was within or adjacent to a royal *villa*. Despite not being a parochial minster Old Cleeve church has a close relationship with its associated settlement at Carhampton and is in the Carhampton *parochia*. Carhampton church is named in the

Domesday Survey (*DB* 1,6) but the hinterland around it never developed as it did around Old Cleeve church. This is indicated by the 1334 Lay Subsidy Returns for Carhampton and Old Cleeve shown in Table 7.3 (Letters 2010).

Table 7.2. *Post-Roman churches: comparing their topography and morphology*

Church & dedication	Topography	Morphology	Post-Roman site	Initial Minster	Parochial Minster
St Michael **Clapton in Gordano, Somerset**	Promontory site on side of hill	Enclosure not identified. Churchyard rectilinear / irregular	Yes	-	-
St Andrew **Old Cleeve, Somerset**	Promontory site on side of hill	Enclosure not identified. Churchyard rectilinear - road partially goes round it	Yes	Initial minster	-
St Peter & St Paul **South Petherton**	Church on high point on side of hill. Settlement lower. Slightly higher ground to W, S, E	Enclosure curvilinear with road partially curving round it. Churchyard curvilinear / irregular road partially curves round it	Possible	-	Yes
St Carantoc **Crantock, Cornwall**	Just off top of hill on promontory site overlooking stream/river flowing into sea; it is on sloping site above village	Enclosure boundary not clear, probably rectilinear. Churchyard rectilinear / irregular	Most likely	Yes Royal *villa* 11.4 kms away at Arralas (Turner 2006a, 62, table 5)	Certain / probable early British monastery (Pearce 2004, 168, figure 69) Superior early medieval ecclesiastical community (Turner 2006a, 38, table 1)
St Michael **Honiton St Michael, Devon**	High point on side of steep hill overlooks river valley. Church on flattish platform	Enclosure not identified. Churchyard curvilinear / linear.	Yes	No evidence but was the parish church of Honiton into the 20thC (Hoskins 2003, 412)	Not mentioned by Pearce (2004), Turner (2006a) or Higham (2008)

It is of note that Carhampton church is not sited within the main settlement of Carhampton (Figures 7.4a and 7.4b). As can be seen in Table 7.3 both Carhampton and Old Cleeve were stripped of church income via prebends and appropriation

(*Taxatio*). However, Old Cleeve church was valued for tax at more than twice (£26 13s 4d) the amount for Carhampton church (£12 13s 4d).

Table 7.3.   *Comparison between Carhampton and Old Cleeve: historical information*

Church & dedication	Parochia	Category of church	Prebend or appropriated	*Villae regalis /* 'comital' manor	1086 most important place in *parochia*	*Taxatio*	1334 Lay Subsidy Return
St John the Baptist **Carhampton**	Carhampton	Minster church in royal *villa*	Prebend & appropriated	Royal *villa*	Yes	£12 13s 4d	-
St Andrew **Old Cleeve, Somerset**	Carhampton	Post-Roman church + initial minster linked to Carhampton	Prebend & appropriated	Possible royal *villa* in valley below church 'Comital' manor	-	£26 13s 4d Highest in *parochia*	£30-75 Highest in *parochia*

This interrelationship between Carhampton and Old Cleeve, both as churches and settlements, indicates that Old Cleeve retained its post-Roman significance in the landscape and local community. Therefore, the 'new' minster of Carhampton, despite being in a royal *villa*, did not usurp the role of Old Cleeve as the central local settlement. Similarly Crantock as an early monastic site and South Petherton as the site of a possible post-Roman church also retained their importance as central places in the landscape.

7.3.6   *Comparing the topographical and morphological setting of initial minsters*

There is no evidence to suggest the extent to which initial minsters were monastic establishments or whether, for example, they were generally served by an individual priest supported by deacons. It is therefore impossible to say whether the four churches which have been identified as having been established within early medieval monastic settlements are representative of a majority or a minority of initial minsters. One of the churches which is considered is Cheddar and the evidence that it had monastic origins is based both on a statement in King Alfred's will (*c.*885 AD; charter S 1507) and charters, one of which, dated 744 AD (charter S 1410) which is said to be 'corrupt but essentially authentic' (*Sawyer* [accessed March 2021]). Whether the topography and morphology of the four churches identified as being

sited within early medieval monastic enclosures is significantly different from that of other initial minsters will be considered.

The four churches are Glastonbury (Figure 7.21), Cheddar (Figures 7.22a and 7.22b), and Street (Figures 7.7a and 7.7b) in Somerset, and Braunton, Devon (Figures 7.23a and 7.23b). Table 7.4 shows the key information about each church. Three of these, Cheddar, Braunton and Street are on flat sites close to water or low-lying land. The topographical position of Glastonbury church is rather different being on a sloping site in two directions: sloping uphill overall from the north-east corner of the rectilinear enclosure around the abbey to the south-west corner, but also sloping significantly downhill from the north-east corner to the north-west corner of the enclosure.
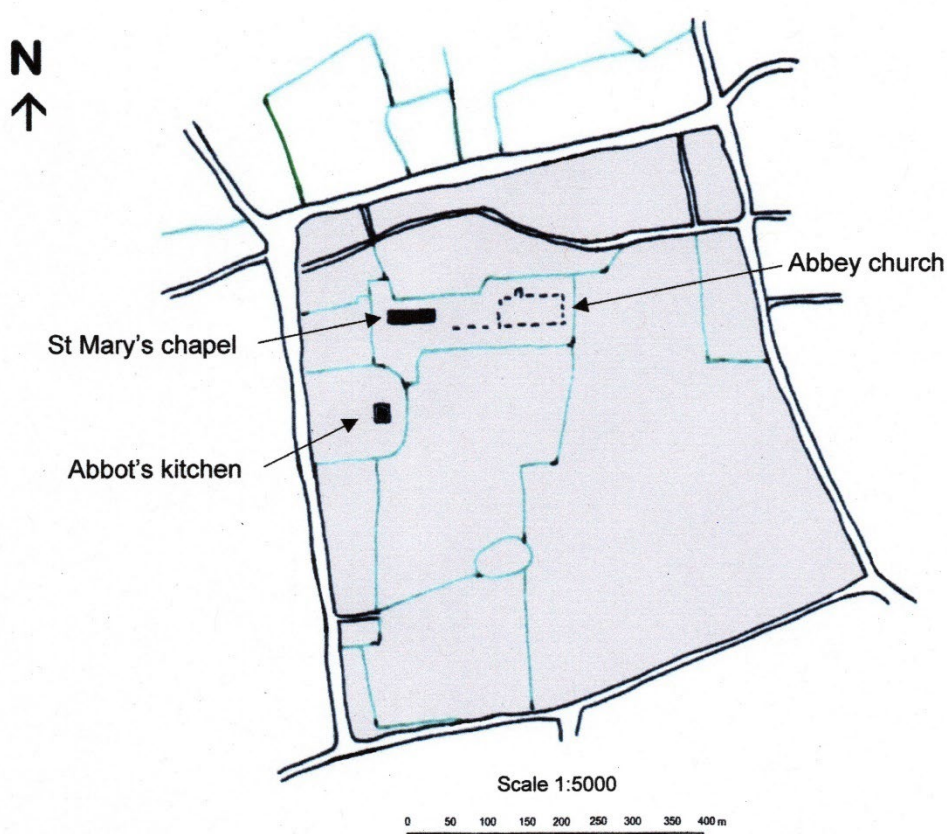
Figure 7.21.   *Map depicting the morphology of Glastonbury Abbey reflecting the known early medieval road layout. Map based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK, Glastonbury Tithe Map dated 1844, map 25 (Aston and Leech 1977) and map B (Gathercole 2003d) based on earlier maps.*
Maps downloaded [August 2019] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).
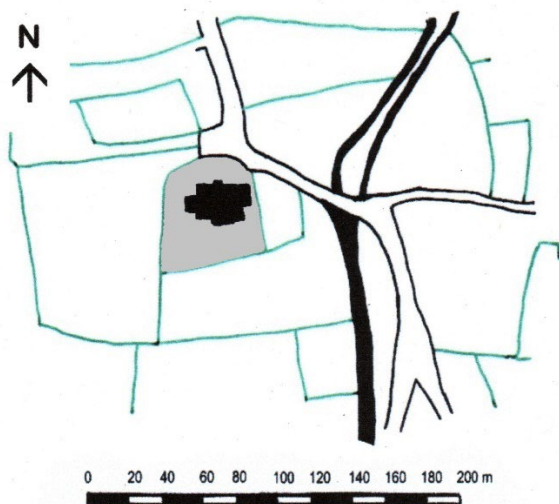
Figure 7.22a. *Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Cheddar based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1903, Landmark Information Group, UK, Cheddar Tithe Map dated 1839 and map B (Richardson 2003b).*

Figure 7.22b. *View from outside St Andrew's church, Cheddar looking southwards out of Cheddar; the church and surrounding road network are on a very flat site (author's photo).*
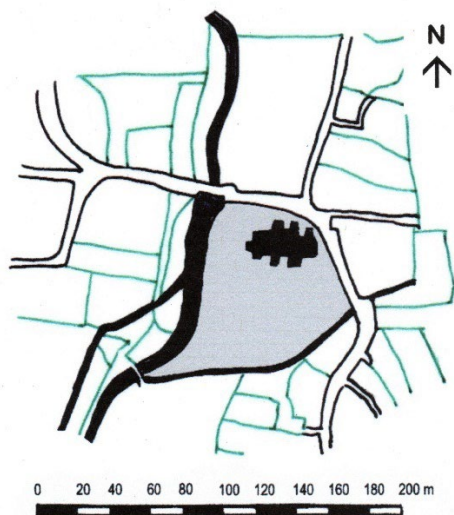
Figure 7.23a. *Map depicting the settlement morphology of Braunton, Devon based on 1:2500 OS Devon County Series 1st Revision 1902-5, [geospatial data] published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK and Braunton Tithe Map dated 1840; no earlier maps located.*
Maps downloaded [August 2019] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

Figure 7.23b. *View to the north-north-east across the churchyard of St Brannoc's church, Braunton showing how it is sited on a flat site surrounded by higher ground (author's photo).*

Table 7.4.   *Churches with monastic origins: comparing their topography and morphology*

Church & dedication	Topography	Morphology	Post-Roman site	Identified as monastic site	Initial Minster	Parochial Minster
St Andrew **Cheddar, Somerset**	Flat site near stream	Enclosure curvilinear / partially curvilinear	-	Yes (Blair 1996)	Yes 1066 held by king	Yes
St Mary **Glastonbury, Somerset**	Side of hill with higher ground to SE, E & NE	Rectilinear enclosure. No separate churchyard apparent	Original site possibly post-Roman see Figure 7.24.	Yes	YES 1066 held by Glastonbury	Yes
Holy Trinity **Street, Somerset**	Flat site adjacent to lower lying land beside R. Brue	Impossible to know if had larger enclosure, large curvilinear churchyard	-	Yes (Calder 2004, 4-11)	Possibly 1066 held by Glastonbury	-
St Brannoc **Braunton, Devon**	Flat site but churchyard higher than surrounding land. Modern town is on lower previously marshy ground	Enclosure curvilinear road partially curves round it - stream forms part of boundary. Churchyard curvilinear	-	Certain / probable early British monastery (Pearce 2004, 168, figure 69, 280, figure 118)	Unclear 1066 held by king	Yes Minster & hundred centre (Pearce 2004, 280, figure 118) Important church / minster & royal *villa* (Turner 2006a, 37, figure 7, 64, table 6) Major Dumnonian church & minster (Higham 2008, 96)

There are other significant differences between Glastonbury Abbey and the other four churches in that it is the only one in a large rectilinear enclosure (*c*. 410 x 460 metres) within a rectilinear road layout; it is so large that a smaller scale map 1:5,000 is used in Figure 7.21. It has, however, been stated that in the late Roman / post-Roman period the early monastery at Glastonbury was situated on a promontory which during the winter was only accessible from the east because of the low-lying wetlands around the river Brue (Pearce 2004, 173; Som. HER No. 23614; see Figure 7.24).
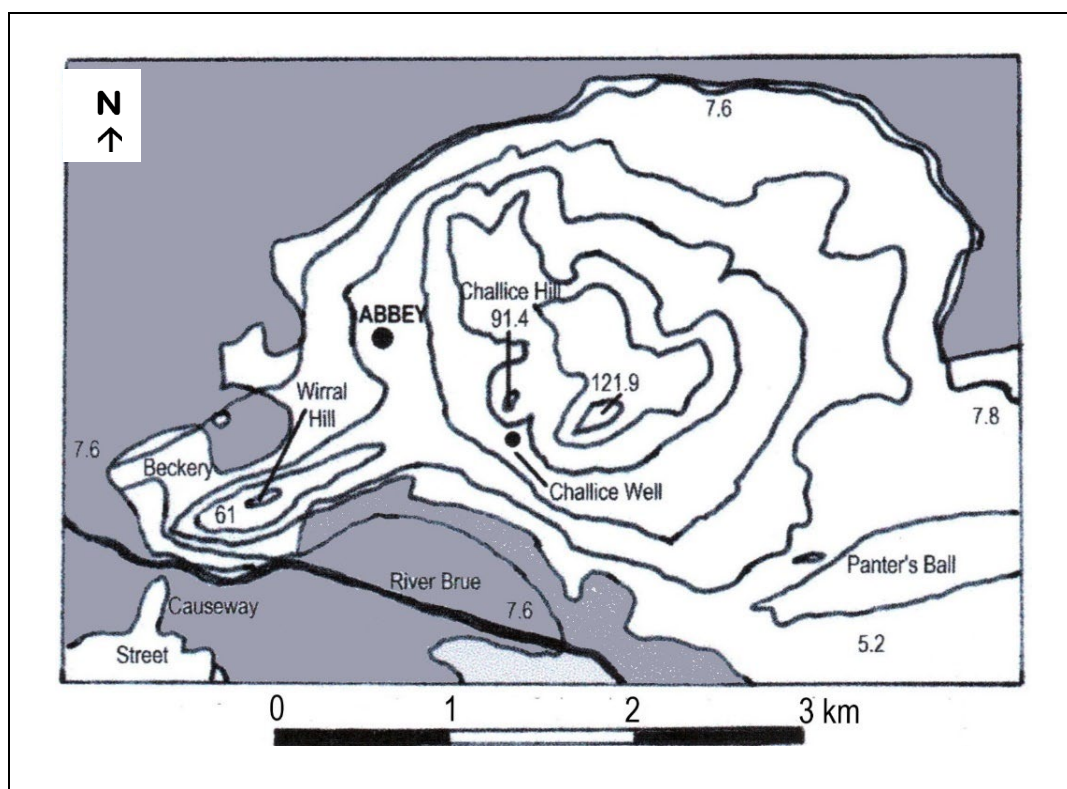
Figure 7.24. *Position of early monastery at Glastonbury in post-Roman period (after Pearce 2004, 174, figure 71).* ▬▬▬ *Limit of flooding in modern period. Position of medieval abbey can be seen in Figure 7.25.*

It is only Street church that has not been identified as being located within a royal *villa*, and it is the only church that has not been categorised as a parochial minster. Street is identified as being in the early medieval *parochia* of Butleigh. By *c.*1291 Butleigh church was valued at £15 13s 4d while Street was valued at £18 13s 4d and had the highest valuation in the *parochia* (*Taxatio*). This change in status between the churches and settlements of Butleigh and Street appears to have been in progress in 1086 when Butleigh and its environs had a higher population than Street, but Street had a higher value than Butleigh (*DB* 8,12. 8,16); this relationship is discussed further in Chapter 8. Both Domesday places were held in 1066/86 by Glastonbury Abbey. However, one crucial difference between Butleigh and Street is that Street is close to the precursor of the A39 and Butleigh was probably not very accessible (Figure 7.25). In addition, Street was much closer to Glastonbury. This is a good example, as is that of Carhampton and Old Cleeve, of the extent to which the development of the Church in Somerset was dynamic and not static, with one church being downgraded in favour of another.
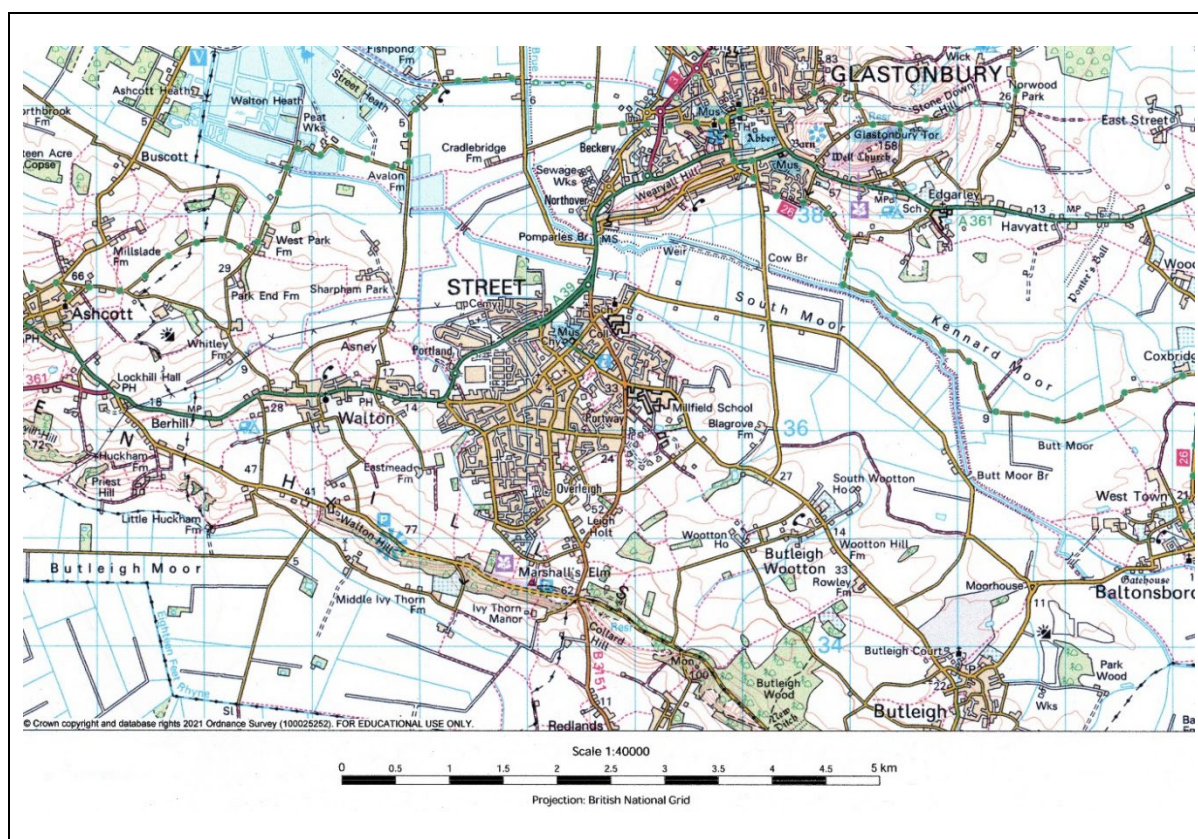
Figure 7.25.   *Map showing geographical relationship between Butleigh, Street and Glastonbury. (Scale 1:40,000, Ordnance Survey Current Online Edition, Landmark Information Group, UK downloaded [March 2021] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).*

Four churches which have been identified as being initial minsters are now considered, South Brent (Figure 7.26) and Kilmersdon (Figure 7.27) in Somerset and Beaminster (Figure 7.28) and Charminster (Figure 7.29) in Dorset. Table 7.5 shows the key information about each church. The two Somerset initial minsters and the two Dorset churches, which may well be so described, vary in their topography and morphology. St Michael's church at South Brent (*c.*21 metres above sea level) is on the lower slope of Brent Knoll hill, the crown of which is between 130-139 metres in height. On top of the hill above the church are the remains of an Iron Age hillfort in the vicinity of which have been found pottery sherds dating from the third and fourth centuries (Burrow 1981; Som. HER No. 11113). This is like the position of Norton Fitzwarren church, which has also been identified as on or close to a post-Roman site and is situated below Norton Camp hillfort (Burrow 1981; Som. HER No. 43399). The other three churches and their adjacent settlements are all surrounded by higher

land, however Beaminster church is on a knoll which is higher than the buildings surrounding it, while both Kilmersdon and Charminster are on flat sites.

Table 7.5. *Initial minsters: comparing their topography and morphology*

| Church & dedication	Topography	Morphology	Post-Roman site	Initial Minster	Parochial Minster
St Michael **South Brent, Somerset**	Side of hill below Iron Age fort	Enclosure is unclear. Churchyard is rectilinear / irregular and abuts rectilinear road network	Yes or below post-Roman site	Yes Held 1066 by Glastonbury	Yes but not royal villa
St Peter & St Paul **Kilmersdon, Somerset**	Flattish site overlooking stream surrounded by high ground	Enclosure may be rectilinear / irregular with stream & road as part of boundary. Farm adjacent to rectilinear / irregular churchyard	-	Yes Held 1066 by Bp Peter	Yes but only possible royal *villa* based on its topography
St Mary **Beaminster, Dorset**	Church on knoll which is high point above adjacent buildings. Overlooks stream. Overall settlement is surrounded by high ground	Enclosure is linear and curvilinear includes stream as part of boundary. Churchyard curvilinear	Possible	Yes Royal *villa* 4 kms away at Kingland (Turner 2006a, 67, table 7) 1066 held by monks of Sherborne	Yes but not a royal *villa*. Minster (Hall 2000, 27) Certain / probable West Saxon minster (Pearce 2004, 168, figure 69) Important church (Turner 2006a, 39, figure 8)
St Mary **Charminster, Dorset**	Flat site as is surrounding land. Overall settlement surrounded by higher ground	Enclosure partially integrated into rectilinear road layout. Churchyard rectilinear; partially bounded by stream	-	Probably initial minster. Held 1066 by Bp of Salisbury	Minster (Hall 2000, 27) Certain / probable West Saxon minster (Pearce 2004, 168, figure 69)

The enclosures around Beaminster, Charminster and Kilmersdon churches are all partially bounded by streams, whereas South Brent church overlooks a large area of low-lying land that adjoins the river Parrett near Burnham (Figure 7.30). Charminster church has not been identified as having monastic origins (Hall 2000, 40), and neither has Kilmersdon. However, when their topography is compared to that of Cheddar and Crantock which are also on flat sites close to water or low-lying land similarities can be seen. One critical difference is that Charminster, Kilmersdon and

South Brent churches are all associated, as is Glastonbury, with rectilinear or probable rectilinear enclosures (Figures 7.26, 7.27 and 7.29).
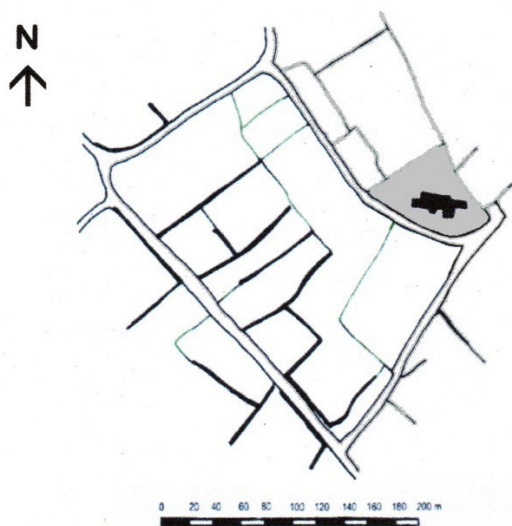
Curved south-eastern churchyard boundary reflects 1811 map, by 1841 it was more angular.

No changes to the road layout since 1829

Figure 7.26.   Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of South Brent based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1903, Landmark Information Group, UK, South Brent Tithe Map dated c.1841 and 1811 map (DD/CC/T/11465).

Figure 7.27.   Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Kilmersdon based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK, Kilmersdon Tithe Map dated 1839 and 1829 map (T/PH/hyl/2).

No changes to road layout

Figure 7.28.   Map depicting the settlement morphology of Beaminster, Dorset based on 1:2500 OS Dorset County Series 1st Revision 1900-1, published 1903, Landmark Information Group, UK, Beaminster Tithe Map dated 1842 and figure 8 (Bellamy and Davey 2011).
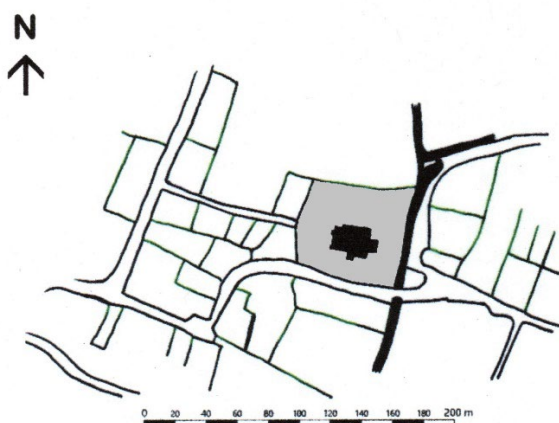
Figure 7.29.   Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Charminster, Dorset based on 1:2500 OS Dorset County Series 1st Revision 1900-1, published 1902, Landmark Information Group, UK and Charminster Tithe Map dated 1839; no earlier maps located.

Maps downloaded [August 2019] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).

Figure 7.30.   *View from St Michael's churchyard, South Brent [Brent Knoll] looking north-west; the sea is to the west. The church is identified as on or close to a post-Roman site (author's photo).*

All these churches were held by the Church in 1066. Whether these initial minsters were established on new sites, or whether post-Roman or early monastic sites were utilised will not be conclusively established without archaeological evidence.

7.3.7   *Comparing the topographical and morphological setting of parochial minsters*

Eight churches which have been identified as being parochial minsters are considered here, Cheddar, Chewton Mendip, Crewkerne and Milborne Port in Somerset, Braunton and South Molton in Devon, and Bere Regis and Iwerne Minster in Dorset. Tables 7.6 to 7.9 show the key information about each church.

Chewton Mendip church (Figure 7.11a), categorised as on a post-Roman religious site, is sited on a local high-point (154.5 metres above sea level) overlooking the intersection of several roads including the modern A39 (139.6 metres) around which the village developed. A road and two lanes connect the

church to the village, but it is *c.*160 metres uphill from the cross-roads at the centre of the village. The churchyard is rectilinear but the wider enclosure is curvilinear (Figure 7.11b). South Molton church in Devon (144 metres) is sited just below the brow of a hill which slopes away on all four sides and is categorised as on a post-Roman religious site (see Figures 7.31a and 7.31b).

Table 7.6.   *Parochial minsters originating as post-Roman churches: comparing their topography and morphology*

Church & dedication	Topography	Morphology	Post-Roman site	Initial Minster	Parochial Minster
St Mary **Chewton Mendip, Somerset**	High point in landscape. Settlement is lower than church near R. Chew & surrounded by high ground	Enclosure curvilinear. Churchyard rectilinear	Yes	-	Yes
St Mary Magdalene **South Molton, Devon**	Just below top of hill	Enclosure rectilinear / irregular	Yes	Possible	Yes Certain / probable West Saxon minster & hundred centre (Pearce 2004, 168, figure 69, 280, figure 118) Important church + centre of hundred (Turner 2006a, 37, figure 7) English rural minster (Higham 2008, 96)

The churchyard has a downward slope to the south and beyond it the land continues its downward slope so that in the main thoroughfare of Broad Street / The Square the height above sea level is *c.*136 metres. South Molton church is in a rectilinear churchyard which is within a rectilinear road network. Its morphology looks similar to the road layout around St Mary's, Taunton (Figures 7.32a and 7.32b), except that it covers a much smaller area. In the late-nineteenth century South Molton church was just above the centre of the town. The extent to which the centre of the town was built up in 1844 when the Tithe Map was drawn is unclear from the map. Consideration needs to be given as to whether the original enclosures around South Molton and Taunton churches could have been curvilinear given how differently they appear from the enclosures around Milverton and Milborne Port churches.

Figure 7.31a. *Map of South Molton, Devon based on 1:2500 OS Devon County Series 1st Revision 1902-5, data] published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK. Printed scale 1:5000.*
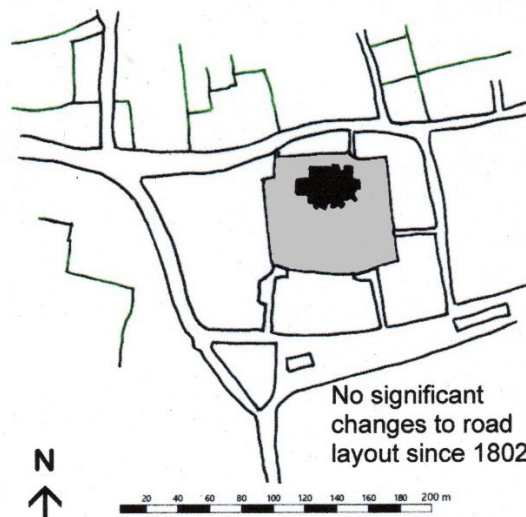
Figure 7.31b. *Map depicting the settlement morphology of South Molton, Devon based on 1:2500 OS Devon County Series 1st Revision 1902-5, published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK, South Molton Tithe Map dated 1844, 1802 OS Surveyor's drawing (Sturgess 2013, 47) and figure 3 (Sturgess, 2013).*

Maps downloaded [August 2019] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap)
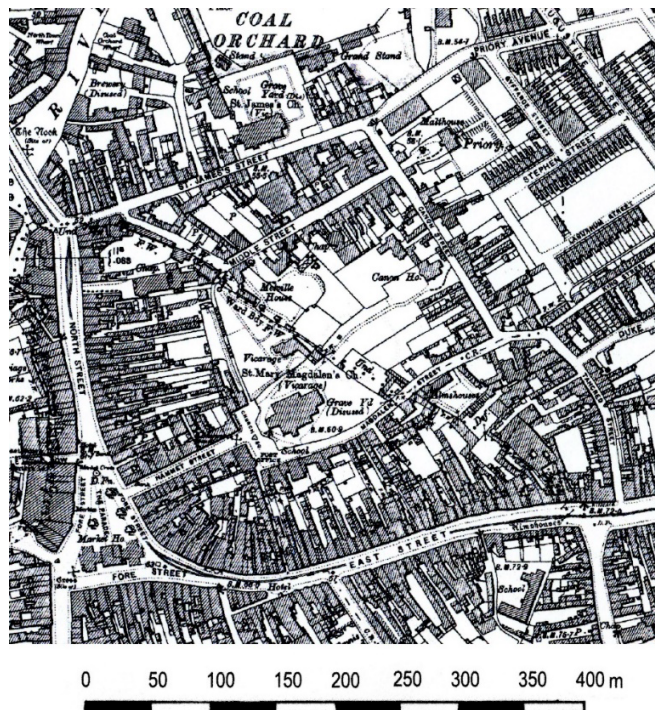
Figure 7.32a. *Map of Taunton based on 1:2500 OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3 published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK. Printed scale 1:5000. OS map downloaded [August 2019] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).*
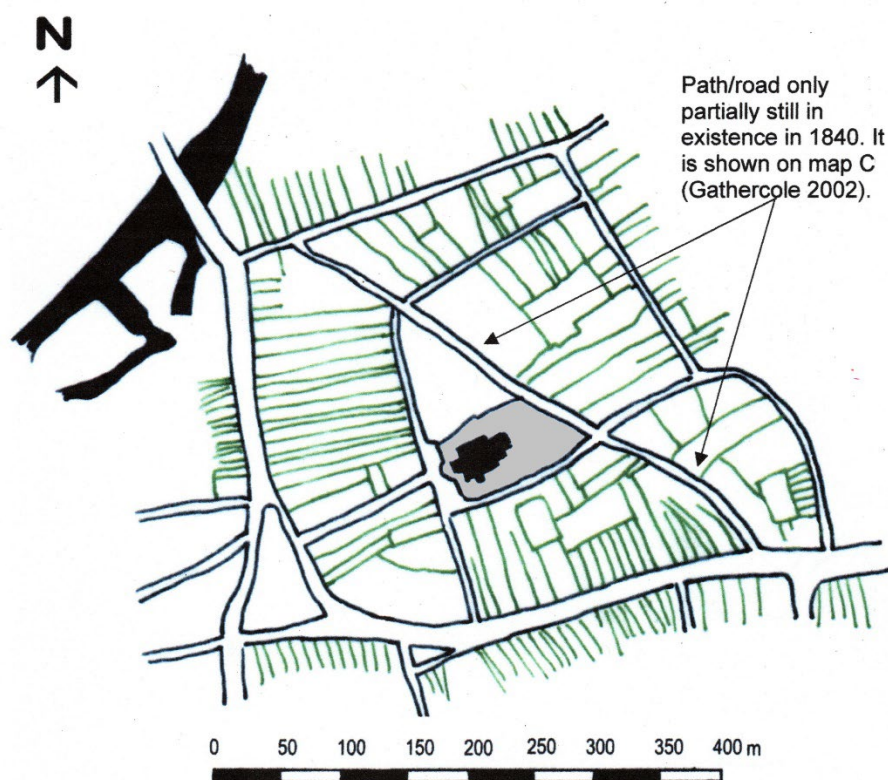
Figure 7.32b.   *Map depicting the settlement morphology of Taunton based on 1:2500 [printed scale 1:5000] OS Somerset County Series 1st Revision 1900-3, published 1904, Landmark Information Group, UK, Taunton Tithe Map dated 1840, map 58 (Aston and Leech 1977) and maps B and C (Gathercole 2002). OS map downloaded [August 2019] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap).*

Chewton Mendip church is identified as a parochial minster. South Molton church has been variously described as a certain or probable minster, an important church at the centre of a hundred, and an English rural minster (Pearce 2004, 168, figure 69, 280, figure 118; Turner 2006a, 37, figure 7; Higham 2008, 96). In 1066/86 South Molton was held by the king, taxed on only 1 ½ virgates but had land for 40 ploughs and paid £10 by weight (Devon *DB* 1,6). These are all characteristics that have been identified in Chapter 5 as indicating a royal *villa*, consequently the indications are that South Molton church was a parochial minster. Both Chewton Mendip and South Molton churches have been identified as originating on post-Roman religious sites and that both became parochial minsters. In addition, by 1334 both were at the centre of a thriving community as the Lay Subsidy Returns show: Chewton Mendip's return was £90, and that for South Molton was £62-71 (Letters 2010).

The next two parochial minsters to be evaluated are Cheddar and Braunton which have already been discussed above and identified as being on early monastic sites. Cheddar church is identified as being on a minster site adjacent to a royal *villa* with a royal and episcopal palace (Rahtz 1964; Som. HER No. 11442). Braunton has been described as a major *Dumnonian* church, an early British monastery, a certain or probable minster, an important church, a royal *villa* and at the centre of a hundred (Pearce 2004, 168, figure 69, 280, figure 118; Turner 2006a, 37, figure 7, 64, table 6; Higham 2008, 96). Table 7.7 shows a range of key information about both churches which clearly shows several similarities between them. The key difference is that Braunton and its environs did not develop during the medieval period as no Lay Subsidy Return has been identified for it (Letters 2010). It is of note that neither was identified as being a market town in the sixteenth century (Letters 2010; Everitt 1967). Braunton and Cheddar churches have been identified as originating as early medieval monastic sites which were later adopted as parochial minsters but the settlements around them never developed into medieval towns.

Table 7.7.   *Parochial minsters identified by others as monastic sites: historical information*

Church & dedication	Holder in 1066/86	Land taxed & no. of ploughlands in 1086	Value or amount paid in 1086	*Evidence for DB church or priest*	Prebend or appropriated	*Taxatio*	1334 Lay Subsidy Return
St Andrew **Cheddar, Somerset**	King	Never taxed. No. of hides not known. Land for 20 ploughs	Paid £21 0s 2 1/2d at 20d to the *ora*	No mention in *DB* but reference in King Alfred's will	Possible prebend Appropriated	£26 13s 4d	£40-46
St Brannoc **Braunton, Devon**	King	Assessed at 1 hide & geld paid for 1 virgate. Land for 44 ploughs.	Renders £16 20s by weight & 20s rendered in the king's farm. Value of 4 ploughlands 20s.	Algar the priest holds 1 hide in alms from king. Land for 8 ploughs	Prebend	£56 0s 0d	-

The last group of parochial minsters discussed here are all sited within rectilinear or partial rectilinear road layouts (Tables 7.8 and 7.9). Two are from Somerset Crewkerne (Figure 7.6) and Milborne Port (Figure 5.3). Two are from Dorset Bere Regis (Figure 7.33) and Iwerne Minster (Figure 7.34). In addition, Charminster and South Molton churches, which have already been discussed, are also sited within rectilinear enclosures. It is important to note that the period during which these road

layouts were established cannot be determined without further evidence (Pearce 2004, 183). It should not therefore be assumed that all these road layouts were planned and laid out for the same reason. Indeed, they might well have evolved over time. Only South Molton is identified as being on a post-Roman site and only Iwerne Minster is identified as being established as a pre-950 AD monastic site (Hall 2000, 40). Iwerne Minster is also the only church identified as probably being an initial minster as it was linked with the royal *villa* of Child Okeford some 4 kms away (Turner 2006a, 67, table 7). The topography of Iwerne Minster is similar to that of Ilminster and Wiveliscombe which have been identified as initial minsters established by the Church. Iwerne Minister church is sited low down on the side of a hill which slopes down towards streams to the west and the south of the building. There is an irregular shaped churchyard within a small rectilinear / curvilinear enclosure. This in turn is within a larger rectilinear / curvilinear enclosure which may have originally been more curvilinear (Figure 7.34).

Looking at the information in Table 7.9 it is immediately clear that there are differences between Charminster and Iwerne Minster churches and the other four churches. Both Charminster and Iwerne Minster were held by the Church and the number of hides on which geld was paid was comparable to the number of ploughlands (see Sections 5.27 and 5.28). This is a strong indicator that these churches had been established by the Church as initial minsters and that they were never royal *villae*. Theresa Hall (2000, 18) has identified Iwerne Minster as a parochial minster which means that five of these churches are identified as parochial minsters. In total the topography and morphology of fourteen parochial minsters have been evaluated. Two are identified as on post-Roman sites, Chewton Mendip within a curvilinear enclosure and South Molton within a rectilinear enclosure.

The churchyards and enclosures around the other five churches vary. Crewkerne has a curvilinear churchyard and is within a rectilinear road layout, albeit one which has curvilinear aspects to it. Milborne Port has a rectilinear churchyard and again there are curvilinear aspects to the large enclosure around the church. Bere Regis churchyard is partially curvilinear and is within a larger rectilinear enclosure which is bounded by a stream to the south and by roads to the north and east. Charminster churchyard is rectilinear and is within a rectilinear enclosure that is bounded by a

road to the west. The eastern and part of the southern boundary (not shown on Figure 7.29) are formed by streams. This enclosure is relatively flat but to the west and the east of it there are steep hills and therefore it seems likely that it is the topography that has influenced the shape and size of the enclosure. Two have been identified as possibly being on post-Roman sites; South Petherton within a curvilinear enclosure and South Brent within a rectilinear enclosure. Several have been identified as being originally established as monastic sites, and some as initial minsters, while others have been established within royal *villae*.

Table 7.8.   *Parochial minsters within rectilinear road layouts: comparing their topography and morphology*

Church & dedication	Topography	Morphology	Initial Minster	Parochial Minster
St Bartholomew **Crewkerne, Somerset**	Side of hill sloping down to Market Square	Irregular / rectilinear enclosure integrated into road network. Churchyard curvilinear	-	Yes
St John the Evangelist **Milborne Port, Somerset**	Side of hill; enclosure sloping down to stream	Rectilinear enclosure integrated into road network. Churchyard rectilinear / irregular	-	Yes
St Mary the Virgin **Bere Regis, Dorset**	On slight slope that ends in promontory on 2 sides. Facing stream / river. Overall settlement is surrounded by higher ground	Enclosure within rectilinear road layout. Churchyard rectilinear / partially curvilinear	-	Parochial minster (Hall 2000, 14). Important early church (Turner 2006a, 39, figure 8)
St Mary **Iwerne Minster, Dorset**	On 3 sides settlement is surrounded by higher ground, on other by low-lying land. Church on side of hill	Larger enclosure – unclear if original – is irregular / rectilinear. Smaller enclosure partially curvilinear / rectilinear. Churchyard irregular	Yes Royal *villa* 4 kms away at Child Okeford (Turner 2006a, 67, table 7)	Parochial minster (Hall 2000, 18). Major early church (Turner 2006a, 67, table 7)
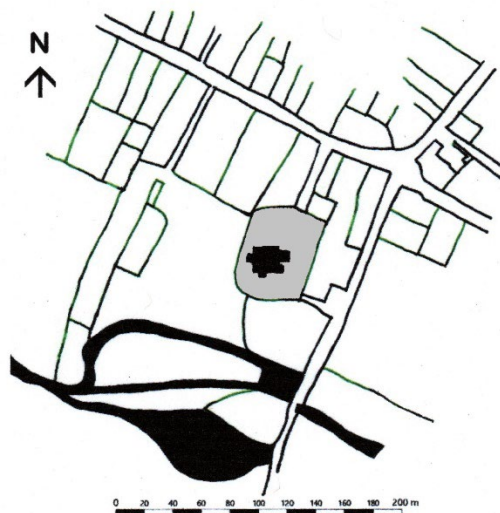
Figure 7.33. *Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Bere Regis, Dorset based on 1:2500 OS Dorset County Series 1st Revision 1900-1, published 1902, Landmark Information Group, UK and Bere Regis Tithe Map dated 1844; no earlier maps located.*

Figure 7.34. *Map depicting the settlement and field morphology of Iwerne Minster, Dorset based on 1:2500 OS Dorset County Series 1st Revision 1900-1, published 1901, Landmark Information Group, UK and Iwerne Minster Tithe Map dated 1838 and 1796 map (PE-IWM/MI/1/1).*

Maps downloaded [August 2019] from Digimap (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap)

The churches that originated as monastic settlements are in curvilinear or partially curvilinear enclosures except for Glastonbury which may have been originally. Some churches held by the Church are in rectilinear or possibly rectilinear enclosures like Charminster, Iwerne Minster and Kilmersdon, all of which have been identified as initial minsters. Several churches held by the king or royal family in 1066 are in rectilinear or possible rectilinear enclosures like Bere Regis, Crewkerne and South Molton. However, some churches held by the king are not in rectilinear enclosures like Chewton Mendip and South Petherton. It is therefore quite clear that the morphology around a church cannot be used as an identifying characteristic of parochial minsters.

Table 7.9. *Parochial minsters within rectilinear road layouts: historical information*

Church & dedication	Holder in 1066/86	Land taxed & no. of ploughlands in 1086	Value or amount paid in 1086	*Evidence for DB church or priest*	Prebend or appropriated	*Taxatio*	1334 Lay Subsidy Return
St Bartholomew **Crewkerne, Somerset**	Edeva – royal family 1066. King 1086	Never taxed. No. hides not known. Land for 40 ploughs.	Paid £46 in white silver	Church and land	-	£50 13s 4d Highest in parochia	£137-88 Highest in parochia
St John the Evangelist **Milborne Port, Somerset**	King	Never taxed. No. hides not known. Land for 50 ploughs.	Paid £80 in white silver	Church and land	Appropriated	£23 6s 8d Highest in parochia	£30-00
St Mary the Virgin **Bere Regis, Dorset**	King	No. of hides not known. Manor, including other settlements, had land for 55 ploughs. Manor paid 1 night's revenue	Did not pay tax.	Priest holds church of Dorchester & Bere Regis	Part of prebend with Charminster	Only entry for vicarage – value £5 but part of a prebend valued at £120 0s 0d	£123-00
St Mary **Charminster, Dorset**	Bp of Salisbury	Paid geld for 10 hides. Land for 8 ploughs.	Land for 2 ploughs which has never paid geld. Value £16	-	Part of prebend with Bere Regis	£120 0s 0d includes 2 churches & 2 chapels	£18-50
St Mary **Iwerne Minster, Dorset**	Shaftesbury Abbey	Paid geld for 18 hides. Land for 16 ploughs	Value 1066 £10	-	Prebend	£21 0s 0d	-
St Mary Magdalene **South Molton, Devon**	King	Paid geld on 1 ½ virgates. Land for 40 ploughs.	Renders £10 by weight	4 priests hold 1 virgate in alms. Value 20s	-	£14 16s 8d	£62-71

7.4 CONCLUSION

In Somerset it is evident that post-Roman churches played a key role in the initial organisational framework of the early medieval Church. Some of these post-Roman churches developed into parochial minsters and medieval mother-churches such as Chewton Mendip. This network of post-Roman churches was then overlain in many cases, but not all, by the Church establishing a series of initial early medieval minsters. These were sited outside, and in the main some distance from the royal

villae. Lastly, the parochial early medieval minsters were established within or adjacent to royal *villae*. Frequently these minster settlements developed commercially and became medieval towns, for example Wells; an apparently very straightforward progression. However, this was not always the case, as the hinterland around some post-Roman churches became commercially successful in the medieval period, for example Old Cleeve despite its church not being a parochial minster, as discussed in Section 7.3.5. While some royal *villae*, despite a close relationship with a parochial minster, had lost importance by the eleventh century, for example Carhampton.

Without more multi-disciplinary research it is impossible to identify whether initial minsters were established elsewhere to the extent they have been identified in Somerset. The most wide-ranging review of how the Church developed in the South-West discusses at length when churches might have been founded, their topographical setting, and the relationship between minsters and royal *villae* (Turner 2006a). In concluding his review Sam Turner (2006, 177-8) identifies that in Cornwall between *c.*600-900 AD churches were being founded on sites which were deliberately not close to royal *villae* much like the initial minsters identified in Somerset. Turner (2006, 177-8) then goes on to argue that after 900 AD the independence of churches in Cornwall was eroded as new royal centres were established at or near to important church sites and again this replicates the process identified in Somerset.

The detailed assessment of churches across Somerset and of some other South-Western churches has shown that the topographical setting of churches, and indeed of parochial minsters, varies greatly. However, there is a strong degree of correlation between the topographical setting of a church and whether it can be identified as being of post-Roman origin, or an initial minster, or a parochial minster. The assessment also confirms that the morphology of church sites, including the road network around them, is not a good indicator of when churches might have been established.

The evidence shows that the pattern of Church development across Somerset is complex and includes different trajectories. As no systematic topographical and historical assessment was completed for churches in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset no

overall view of how the Church developed in these counties can be reached. However, this research has shown that there are indications that the early medieval Church in the South-West was based on post-Roman church sites.

In Chapter 8 the historical background of some of the churches discussed in the above case studies is considered. This will broaden the evidence base used to identify when church sites were first adopted as religious focal points and explore why some churches lost significance, while others became parochial minsters. Consideration will also be given as to whether the most significant church within a *parochia* in 1066/86 had always been the most significant in that *parochia*, and indeed whether it retained that significance into the medieval period.

Chapter 8

SOMERSET'S EARLY MEDIEVAL *PAROCHIAE*

8.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter evaluates the criteria used to identify Somerset's early medieval parochial minsters by drawing on the topographical and morphological evidence discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 and also the historical evidence provided by the Domesday Survey and the *c.*1291 *Taxatio*. However, there are limitations in using these textual sources which were discussed in Chapter 2 (see Sections 2.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.8). The evaluation builds on the three minster criteria developed by Theresa Hall (2000) for her research in Dorset but also takes account of the importance rating of each church (as calculated in Chapter 4). All the Somerset churches have been assessed against the criteria discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.2). During the assessment process it became clear that parochial minsters and initial minsters can be clearly identified using historical evidence. The identification and differences between parochial and initial minsters are discussed in Sections 7.3-7.3.7.

The validity of using evidence from the Domesday Survey was considered and whether the naming of churches in the survey is indicative of them being parochial minsters. Unfortunately, although it is a possible indicator, it is not applicable to all of Somerset's minsters. However, this apparent stumbling block in identifying the minsters provided a break-through. It expedited understanding that the site chosen for a parochial minster was a pragmatic response to a perceived need to provide a Christian focal point at a central place, but sometimes a minster was later downgraded and thereby lost its pre-eminence within what had been its *parochia*.

As already discussed in Chapter 7, local allegiances to a long-standing religious focal point within a *parochia* might take precedence over a new parochial minster. This is an important and perhaps surprising finding. The relationship between Carhampton and Old Cleeve within Carhampton *parochia*

illustrates this point very well. Old Cleeve church is identified as being on a site adopted in the post-Roman period. It was an important church because in the *c.*1291 *Taxatio* it was valued at £26 13s 4d, giving it a calculated importance rating of 16. The evidence indicates that Old Cleeve, should be identified as an initial minster, because it continued to provide the focus for local religious allegiance as it had since at least the post-Roman period. This was despite the foundation of a parochial minster at Carhampton which by 1066 had lost significance (see Section 7.3.6). In addition, it is evident that the settlement of Old Cleeve retained its importance as a central place in the landscape into the fourteenth century (see Section 7.3.6). The case study of Winsford *parochia* which is discussed below (Section 8.3.8) also explores the importance of a church on a post-Roman site being adopted as an initial minster.

In each case when a parochial minster had lost status it is because the royal *villa* with which it is associated had also lost status. In some cases this meant that the parochial minster associated with the royal *villa* was also demoted by stripping it of income which was true of Carhampton minster.

This chapter therefore explains the process and criteria by which both initial and parochial minsters are identified. It then explores the trajectories by which the Church evolved within each *parochia* using twelve case studies. The major finding is that not only are there several different trajectories of development within Somerset but that they apparently relate to pragmatic administrative secular and ecclesiastical decisions.

8.1.1   *Identifying Somerset's parochial minsters*

A systematic process of analysis, which is detailed below, was constructed to identify Somerset's minsters and their characteristics. Distinguishing the parochial minsters, the initial minsters and the churches on post-Roman sites has only been possible because no one church was assessed without reference to its relationship to nearby churches or parochial boundaries. Using this inclusive global approach to the research has enabled comparisons between churches to be made within each *parochia* and across the county (Figure 8.1). It is only by using this comprehensive approach that it is possible to reconstruct how the Church developed in Somerset.

Figure 8.1   Map showing *parochiae* used as case studies

Great estate boundary

Parochiae boundary

Case study *parochiae*

1. Bedminster
2. Butleigh
3. Cheddar
4. Chewton Mendip
5. Crewkerne
6. Frome
7. Milverton
8. Milborne Port
9. Shapwick
10. South Brent
11. Stogursey
12. Winsford

Scales
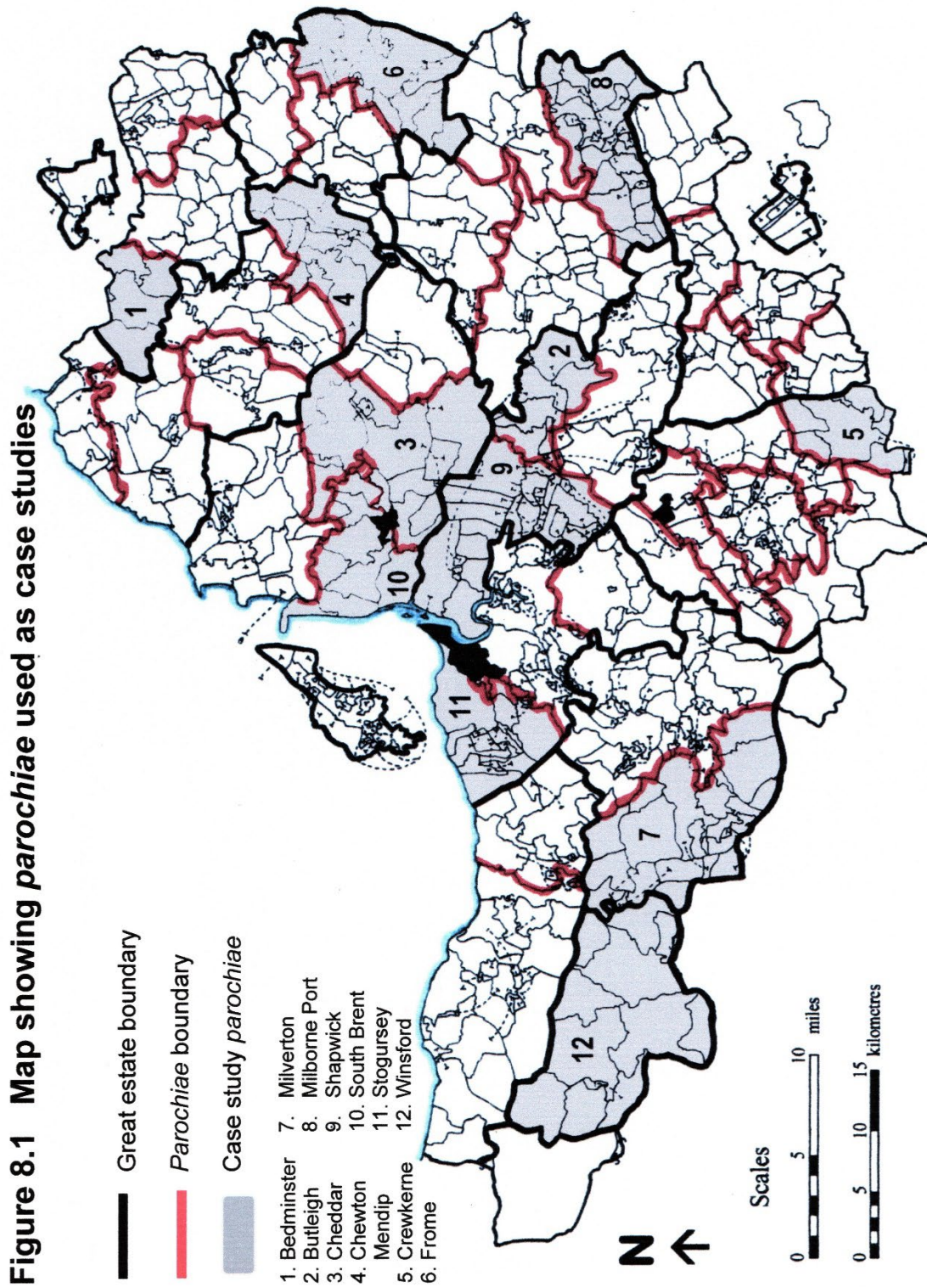
Parish boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

8.1.2   *Criteria used to assess the importance rating of churches*

The first step in understanding how the Church developed is to ascertain which churches in each *parochia* had an importance rating of 10 or more. However, as the research progressed it became necessary, in order to understand the relationships between churches, to calculate the importance score of other churches within each *parochia*. The eleven criteria used to calculate the importance rating of each church are discussed in Chapter 4 (see Section 4.3).

8.1.3   *Criteria used to classify initial and parochial minsters in each parochia*

Next, the churches identified as the most important within each *parochia* were assessed against the criteria listed below to ascertain which should be classified as parochial minsters. As part of this process it is also possible to identify the churches which should be classified as initial minsters and those which should be identified as being on post-Roman sites. The criteria also facilitated consideration of the settlement surrounding these churches in the pre-Conquest period, in 1086, and in the later medieval period.

8.1.4   *Criteria to identify which churches were parochial minsters*

The criteria used to assess which churches should be classified as parochial minsters were:

- whether the three minster criteria identified by Hall (2000, 7-8) were met. These are that:
  - the Domesday place within which the church was sited had been included in a pre-Conquest royal grant, or was held in 1066 by either the royal family or the church (equates to criteria 3 and 4 in Section 4.3.1);
  - its nineteenth-century parish acreage was over 3,000 acres, or that in the Domesday Survey it was recorded as having 50 or more hides (equates to criteria 6, 7 and 8 in Section 4.3.1); and
  - that the church's *Taxatio* value exceeded £13 (equates to criteria 10 and 11 in Section 4.3.1).
- In addition, the following criteria were used:

- o whether the church was named in the Domesday Survey;
- o which church in each *parochia* had the highest importance rating (see Section 4.3.1);
- o which church in each *parochia* had the highest *c.*1291 *Taxatio* value;
- o which place in each *parochia* was the most important in 1066/1086; this is based on the hideage that was taxed in 1086, its value and the number of ploughlands (see Sections 5.2.7 and 5.2.8), its population as stated by the Domesday Survey, and the 1066 Domesday value given for the place. The population figure is as stated in the survey, no attempt was made to calculate the actual total population as the figure is only being used for comparative purposes; and
- o also which place in each *parochia* had the highest population in 1086.

Using the above eight criteria, it is possible to identify the church with the highest score within each *parochia*; this church is classified as the early medieval parochial minster and its name given to the *parochia* within which it is sited. These scores are listed in Appendix 9 as PM scores.

8.1.5 *Identifying the initial minsters*

Having scored all the churches within a *parochia* against the parochial minster criteria it is possible to identify other churches with a high score and to consider which ones should be identified as initial minsters and to reach a view as to when they were likely to have been established. To achieve this the following evidence was considered:

- whether it had been named in a royal grant or charter or another contemporary source as a royal *villa*, or had been identified as a 'comital manor';
- whether the church was prebendal or whether it had been appropriated;
- its *c.*1291 *Taxatio* value;
- how important it was in 1086; and

- the topographical setting of the church, and how it related in the
  nineteenth century to nearby settlement; its morphological setting;
  these terms and settings are discussed in Section 7.2.

8.1.6   *Understanding the trajectory of development in each parochia*

Having established in each *parochia* which church should be classified as the
parochial minster, which was the most important place in 1086, and which
church or churches should be designated as an initial minster. Two further
criteria were then considered:

- the 1334 Lay Subsidy Return valuation of the settlement and its
  environs, as a proxy to indicate the commercial significance of the
  settlement in the fourteenth century (Letters 2010); and
- whether the settlement had been identified as a market town by Alan
  Everitt (1967; quoted by Letters 2010) as an indicator that the
  settlement had become commercially successful by the sixteenth
  century.

These criteria, together with the identification of which place was the most
important in each *parochia* in 1086 enabled a view to be reached about the
extent to which parochial minsters had provided the foci in Somerset for
commercial development and therefore urbanisation.

8.1.7   *Analysis of the data*

The data for the *parochiae* was analysed using an Excel spreadsheet to
facilitate identification of the important churches within each *parochia*. It quickly
became clear that the topographical analysis of the churches is key to
understanding their role within the development of the Church. Tables 8.3 to
8.14 include a summary of the topographical evidence for the churches within
each of the *parochiae* discussed below. Table 7.3 shows similar data for
Carhampton *parochia.*

By systematically using historical and topographical evidence it is possible to
identify the pre-eminent church within each *parochia* and decide whether it had
always been pre-eminent. It is clear there is appropriate evidence to ascertain
which churches in Somerset were early medieval parochial minsters. In many

parochiae this is the church previously identified by others (see Table 3.1), but in some it was not. As stated above, some of the parochial minsters lost status and neither they, nor the settlement within which they were sited, regained importance.

8.2   PAROCHIAL MINSTERS IN SOMERSET

In Somerset 41 early medieval *parochiae* have been identified using mainly topographical evidence as discussed in Chapter 6 (Section 6.2-6.22). Twenty-three (56%) of the parochial minsters meet all the original three minster criteria as identified by Hall (2000, 7-8), but if those certainly meeting two, and those which only possibly meet all three of the criteria, are included the percentage rises to 75.6%. In 39 (95%) *parochiae* the importance rating for the parochial minster is the highest for any church within its *parochia*. The exceptions are Cheddar parochial minster as Wedmore church has a higher rating, and North Cadbury parochial minster. In 29 (70.7%) *parochiae* the parochial minster and its surrounding settlement meet two criteria:

- the importance rating for the parochial minster is higher than for other churches within the same *parochia*; and
- the settlement within which the minster was sited was the most important Domesday place within the *parochia* in 1086.

Most parochial minsters were based in the most important Domesday manor within their *parochia*. In the *parochiae* where this is not true it is possible to see that the original parochial minster had been downgraded, as noted previously in respect of Cheddar church. Sometimes this downgrading of a parochial minster is reflected in a lack of Domesday Survey evidence for either the church or the place within which it was sited, a key example being Kilmersdon (*DB* 16,14) which is considered in Chapter 7 and is discussed further below.

8.2.1   *Understanding the constraints and difficulties in using the minster criteria*

It is important to be aware of the constraints and difficulties in using historical evidence because it involves using data for a purpose for which it was not intended, and therefore it is always important to use more than one source and

type of data. For example, the Domesday Survey population figures were chosen to compare the importance of one place with another in order to assess where a parochial minster was probably sited. However, in some *parochiae* the settlement within which the minster was sited had a lower population than other places within the *parochia*.

There are eight minsters (19.5%) in settlements which did not have the highest population within their *parochiae*, for example Bedminster and North Petherton. In addition, there are five *parochiae* where the evidence is insufficient to judge which settlement had the highest population, for example Cannington. Another example, is the *parochia* of Curry Rivel (*DB* 1,5) in which both Curry Rivel church and its surrounding settlement stand out compared to the other settlements and churches within the *parochia* because:

- it was held by the king in 1066/1086;
- the Domesday place within which it sits is identified as a royal *villa,* it paid the 3rd penny and the night's revenue to the king, and it received customary dues from other places;
- it was the most important place in 1066/86 compared to other places within the *parochia*;
- there is Domesday Survey evidence that it had a church (*DB* 16,11);
- it has the highest importance rating (15) of any church within its *parochia*;
- it meets the three minster criteria: royal or ecclesiastical ownership; acreage greater than 3,000; and was valued at more than £13 in the *c.*1291 Taxatio; and
- in *c.*1291 had the highest *Taxatio* value of any church within its *parochia*.

However, the population of Curry Rivel was 27 (20 villagers, 2 smallholders and 5 slaves; *DB* 1,5) whereas nearby Drayton had 44 (*DB* 9,6). The importance rating for Drayton church, held by Muchelney Abbey (*DB* 9,1), is 6, and other than its comparatively high population, there was nothing significant about it in 1066/86, or indeed later. Therefore, the high population of Drayton compared to that for Curry Rivel is an aberration and does not diminish the importance of Curry Rivel as having the central church within the *parochia*. Indeed, Curry Rivel was sufficiently important that it received renders from neighbouring manors (for example *DB* 19.27; Costen 2011, 172).

A rather different example of a parochial minster in a place which also does not meet the criterion of having the highest population within its *parochia*, or indeed that of being in the most important Domesday place within its *parochia*, is Wellow. This is because it was not included within the Domesday Survey. However, Wellow gave its name to a Domesday hundred (Weldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 145) and Wellow stands out from the other churches and settlements within its *parochia* because:

- it was granted by the king in the mid-eighth century to St Andrew's minster at Wells (charter S262);

- it has the highest importance rating, albeit only 8, of any church within its *parochia*;

- meets the three minster criteria: royal or ecclesiastical ownership; acreage greater than 3,000; and was valued at more than £13 in the *c.*1291 Taxatio; and

- in *c.*1291 it had the highest *Taxatio* value (£32 13s 4d) of any church within its *parochia*, in comparison that for Curry Rivel church was only £20 0s 0d.

There are two notable similarities between the churches of Curry Rivel and Wellow. The first is that they have both been identified as having been established on sites adopted as religious focal points in the post-Roman period. Secondly, the settlement and environs around them never developed commercially; neither was deemed a sixteenth-century market town by Everitt (1967). However, both are close to places which became commercially successful after 1086. Curry Rivel is close to Langport which had a 1334 Lay Subsidy Return of £40 (Letters 2010); this was the seventeenth highest value in the county, while within the *parochia* of Wellow the settlement with the highest Lay Subsidy Return of £15 was Norton St Philip (Letters 2010). There was nothing significant about Norton St Philip church. Its importance rating is 1. It is unlikely it was a significant place in 1066/86 as Norton St Philip had lay landholders and an overall value of £6 in 1066 (*DB* 40,2). However, it had a 1086 population of 19 (*DB* 40,2). Given that Wellow is not even mentioned in the Domesday Survey it seems likely that by 1086 Norton St Philip was already in the ascendant.

Kilmersdon is another example of a church which is identified as a minster but does not meet all the criteria used to identify parochial minsters. In this instance it was not the most important place within its *parochia* in 1066/86. Instead, that criterion is met by Hemington which had a 1086 population of 45 (*DB* 20,1), the highest within the *parochia*, while that for Kilmersdon is not stated. In addition, the 1066/86 value of Hemington was £19 (*DB* 20,1) compared to the value for Kilmersdon which was 10s (*DB* 16,14). The criteria that Kilmersdon does meet are:

- it was held by Bishop Peter of Lichfield and Chester in 1066 and by the king in 1086;

- there is Domesday Survey evidence that it had a church (*DB* 16,14; *Liber Exoniensis 198b, 91b* quoted in Darby and Welldon Finn 1967, Appendix II, 412);

- it has the highest importance rating (17) of any church within its *parochia*; and

- it meets two of the minster criteria: royal or ecclesiastical ownership; and an acreage greater than 3,000.

It is impossible to know if Kilmersdon could have met the third criterion of having a *c.*1291 *Taxatio* value of more than £13 as by then Kilmersdon church was held by the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in England and so was not taxed. It is therefore not known if Kilmersdon church had the highest value within its *parochia* in the thirteenth century. However, it appears that Kilmersdon had been stripped of its resources by 1086 because the sole Domesday entry for it reads:

> In Kilmersdon is ½ hide of land. Value 10s. Bishop Peter held it; now it is in the king's hands (*DB* 16,14).

The hideage for Kilmersdon church is not large but it is greater than the 1 virgate (¼ of a hide) plus 1 furlong (¼ of a virgate) held by Milverton church (*DB* 16,4), and not unlike the 2 ½ virgates held by Cannington church (*DB* 16,3). Kilmersdon clearly had been an important place, because like Wellow it gave its name to a hundred (Welldon Finn and Wheatley 1967, 141), yet another example of a parochial minster and its surrounding settlement being downgraded by the eleventh century.

Therefore, to identify early medieval parochial minsters a range of criteria needs to be used. When a church does not meet all the minster criteria consideration needs to be given to whether or not it meets enough of them to be classed as an exception. The criteria against which a church should be assessed to determine if it was a parochial minster rather than an initial minster, are discussed below. The significance of distinguishing between parochial and initial minsters is discussed in Sections 7.3.3 and 7.3.4.

8.2.2 *Determining if a church was a parochial minster*

It was possible, after ascertaining the characteristics of the most important churches within each *parochia*, to refine the specific criteria needed to determine whether a church had been an early medieval parochial minster. Table 8.1 lists all 41 parochial minsters that have been identified against the above criteria and the rating for each church against the eight parochial minster criteria, excluding the Domesday Survey evidence which is given in Table 8.2. One minster identified as possibly being within a royal *villa* was identified as originating on a post-Roman site. In addition, 11 parochial minsters were established on post-Roman sites, with another five possibly on post-Roman sites. Out of the 41 parochial minsters eleven were within royal *villae* and on, or possibly on, post-Roman sites equating to 26.8%, but overall 39% of parochial minsters were on or possibly on post-Roman sites. In addition, Table 8.1 provides details of the number of chapels held by each church. A commentary on the evidence detailed in Table 8.1 is given below.

8.2.3 *Classification of site*

Some minsters meet two of the classifications and are therefore included twice in the totals: 16 (39%) parochial minsters have been identified as either certainly or possibly being on, or near a post-Roman site. Fourteen (34%) have been identified as probably originating as initial minsters and two as being originally established as monasteries. Twenty-eight seemingly originated as royal *villae*, with another five possibly established in a royal *villa*. Fourteen are located within or adjacent to a rectilinear enclosure; most of these originated as royal *villae* but not all.

Table 8.1. *Criteria to identify Somerset's parochial minsters*

Church	3 minster criteria	PM or MRV or RV	Mother-church + no. of 14thC chapels	Most import-ant place 1086	Church import-ance rating	*Taxatio* value	8 paro-chial minster criteria
Bath	1 + ?	MRV	M-C (1)	YES	14H	Not taxed	6 + ??
Bedminster	3	MRV	M-C (5)	YES	15H	£52 H	8
Bruton	3	MRV	M-C (5)	YES	15H	£26 13s 4d H	7
Butleigh	3	PM ?RV	M-C (1)	?YES	14H	£15 13s 4d	5 + ?
Cannington	2 + ?	MRV	-	?YES	17H	Not taxed	6 + ??
Carhampton	2 + ?	MRV	-	YES	17H	£12 13s 4d	6
Chard	2 + ?	MRV	M-C (1)	?YES	15H	Prebend ?H	5 + ??
Cheddar	3	MRV	M-C (1)	YES	14	£26 13s 4d	6
Chew Magna	3	MRV	M-C (3)	YES	16H	£33 6s 8d H	7
Chewton Mendip	3	MRV	M-C (6)	YES	18H	£57 19s 4d H	8
Congresbury	3	MRV	M-C (1)	YES	17H	£40 H	8
Crewkerne	3	MRV	M-C (5)	YES	18H	£50 13s 4d H	8
Curry Rivel	3	MRV	M-C (2)	YES	15H	£20 H	8
Frome	3	MRV	M-C (3)	YES	18H	£33 13s 4d H	8
Glastonbury	2 + ?	MRV	M-C (2)	YES	17H	Not taxed	6 + ??
Hardington Mandeville	2	MRV	-	YES	11H	£13 6s 8d	5
Ilminster	3	PM	-	YES	15H	£22 10s 0d H	8
Keynsham	3	MRV	-	YES	17H	£38 6s 8d H	8
Kilmersdon	2 + ?	PM ?MRV	-	-	17H	Not taxed	5 + ??
Martock	3	MRV	M-C (1)	YES	14H	£34 6s 8d H	7
Milborne Port	3	MRV	M-C (1)	YES	17H	£23 6s 8d jt H	8
Milverton	3	MRV	M-C (3)	-	16H	£44 13s 4d H	7
Mudford	2	PM ?MRV	M-C (2)	YES	10H	£20 jt H	6
North Cadbury	1	PM ?MRV	-	YES	4 jt H	£13 6s 8d H	4 + ?
North Curry	3	MRV	M-C (2)	YES	18H	£51 H	8
North Petherton	2 + ?	MRV	M-C (9)	?YES	15H	Partially taxed £7	6 + ??
Pilton	2	MRV	M-C (1)	YES	16H	£20 ?H	6
Portbury	2	MRV	-	YES	9H	£10 H	6
Shapwick St Andrew	3	PM	-	YES	15H	£21	6
Somerton	3	MRV	M-C (1)	YES	14H	£25 H	6 + ?
[South] Brent	2 + ?	PM	-	YES	17H	Prebend ?H	6 + ?
South Petherton	3	MRV	M-C (5)	YES	17H	£60 H	8
Stogumber	2	PM	-	-	14H	£20 7s 0d	4
Stogursey	2	PM ?MRV	M-C (3)	YES	16H	£30 H	6
Taunton	3	MRV	M-C (8)	YES	15H	£70 H	8
Wellow	3	PM	M-C (1)	NK	8H	£32 13s 4d H	6
Wells	2 + ?	MRV	-	YES	17H	Not taxed ?H	6 + ??
Winsford	2	PM	-	-	13H	£13 13s 4d H	5
Wrington	3	MRV	M-C (3)	YES	14H	£20 H	7
Yatton	2	PM	M-C (2)	?YES	13H	£30 H	7
Yeovil	3	PM	M-C (1)	-	13H	£25 13s 4d H	5

KEY: H – highest;   jt H – Joint highest score;   IM – initial minster;   M-C – mother-church;   Mon – monastery;   MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known;   PM – parochial minster;   P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear;   RV – royal *villa*.

Table 8.2. *Evidence for churches in the Domesday Survey*

Church	*Parochia*	*DB* evidence	IM or PM or MRV	Church import-ance rating	Most import-ant place 1086
Athelney [in Lyng parish]	North Petherton	YES – Ch/La	-	10	-
Bath	Bath	YES – Ch/La	MRV	14H	YES
Bedminster	Bedminster	YES – La/Pr	MRV	15H	YES
Cannington	Cannington	YES – Ch/La/Pr	MRV	17H	?YES
Carhampton	Carhampton	YES – Ch/La/Pr	MRV	17H	YES
Cheddar	Cheddar	No but KAW	MRV	14	YES
Chewton Mendip	Chewton Mendip	YES Ch/La	MRV	18H	YES
Congresbury	Congresbury	YES – Ch/La	MRV	17H	YES
Crewkerne	Crewkerne	YES – Ch/La	MRV	18H	YES
Curry Rivel	Curry Rivel	YES – Ch/La/Pr	MRV	15H	YES
Frome	Frome	YES – Ch/La	MRV	18H	YES
Glastonbury	Glastonbury	YES – Ch/La/Pr	MRV	17H	YES
'[*Horsey*] *Pignes*'	Cannington	YES – Ch/?La/Pr	IM	3	-
Ilminster	Ilminster	YES - Pr	PM	15H	YES
Keynsham	Keynsham	YES - Pr	MRV	17H	YES
Kilmersdon	Kilmersdon	YES – Ch/La	PM ?MRV	17H	-
Long Ashton	Bedminster	YES – Ch/La/Pr	IM	8	-
Milborne Port	Milborne Port	YES – Ch/La	MRV	17H	YES
Milverton	Milverton	YES – Ch/La	MRV	16H	-
Muchelney	Curry Rivel	YES – Ch/La	Mon.	10	-
North Curry	North Curry	YES – Ch/La	MRV	18H	YES
North Petherton	North Petherton	YES – Ch/La	MRV	15H	?YES
Northover	Somerton	YES – Ch/La	IM	14jt H	-
South Brent	South Brent	YES – La/Pr	PM	17H	YES
South Petherton	South Petherton	YES – Ch/Pr	MRV	17H	YES
Stogumber	Stogumber	YES – Ch/La	PM	14H	-
Taunton	Taunton	YES – Ch/Pr	MRV	15H	YES
Wells	Wells	YES – Ch/La/Pr	MRV	17H	YES
Yatton	Yatton	YES – Ch/La	PM	13H	?YES

KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; RV – royal *villa*.

8.2.4 *Three minster criterion*

All but two minsters, Bath and North Cadbury, score 2 or more against this criterion.

8.2.5 *Minsters within royal villae*

Forty-one parochial minsters have been identified and of these 28 have been categorised as being within a royal *villa,* with a further five examples possibly

being within a royal *villa*, equating in total to *c.*80.5% of the minsters, see Table 8.1.

8.2.6   *Mother-churches*

There is evidence that 28 (68%) minsters had one or more chapels by the fourteenth century; of these only 17 (41.4%) had two or more. However, in the late-thirteenth century the evidence indicates that only 20 (48.7%) of the minsters had one or more chapels (see Appendix 4).

8.2.7   *Most important place in their parochia*

Thirty-five (85.3%) of parochial minsters were sited in the most important place in their *parochia* in 1086. Five of these were only important based on either the population, or the value, or the sum paid. Six (14.6%) minsters were not within the most important place in their *parochiae*, for example Milverton and Yeovil.

8.2.8   *Importance rating*

Thirty-seven (90.2%) minsters have an importance rating between 12 and 18. The lowest rating of 4 pertains to North Cadbury parochial minster which is discussed below because it is an anomaly. Within North Cadbury *parochia*, despite North Cadbury's low rating, no other church in the *parochia* has a higher score against the eight minster criteria (see Section 8.3.9). Only two parochial minsters, North Cadbury and Cheddar (see Section 8.2) do not have the highest importance rating within their *parochia* despite being parochial minsters.

8.2.9   *Taxatio* value *in c.1291*

Where the information is available most minsters have the highest *Taxatio* value in their *parochiae*. Only one minster, Carhampton, for which there is a *Taxatio* value has a value of less than £13. There are twenty-eight minsters that had a *c.*1291 *Taxatio* value which was higher, or probably higher, than for other churches within the *parochia*. There are eight churches identified as parochial minsters for which no full value is given in the *c.*1291 *Taxatio*.

8.2.10   *Parochial minster criteria*

Forty-four percent of minsters meet seven or eight of the criteria and all but four of the minsters have a score of 5 or more. No minster has a score of less than four. The three minsters scoring 4 are Butleigh, North Cadbury and Stogumber and all these lost status in favour of another church.

8.2.11   *Identifying the parochial minsters*

Initially, there were some *parochiae* where identifying the parochial minster is not straight forward due to a lack of evidence or conflicting evidence. Using the above list of criteria it is possible to determine which churches were parochial minsters as it enabled comparisons to be made between churches within each *parochia*. For example, in Milverton *parochia* Wellington met 6 of the criteria but Wiveliscombe only met 4 of the criteria whereas Milverton met 7. Therefore it is evident that Milverton was the parochial minster (see Section 8.3.3 and Figure 8.3). Nether Stowey only met one criterion despite being held in 1066 by Earl Harold (*DB* 35,11-12) whereas nearby Stogursey met six of the criteria even though it had a lay holder in 1066 (*DB* 27,1; see Section 8.3.13 and Figure 8.14). However, this important church and estate was held by the king in 1086 (*DB* 27,1). This policy of William I to take back into royal ownership churches which had been important in the early medieval period has already been noted (see Section 4.2.5).

In some *parochiae* it is not possible to be certain which church should be identified as the parochial minster despite using the above criteria; for example the *parochia* surrounding Dulverton, Kingsbrompton [Brompton Regis] and Winsford. This is also true of the *parochia* surrounding St Decumans and Stogumber, and that surrounding North Cadbury and Wincanton. The *parochia* surrounding Cheddar and Wedmore as mentioned above, is a good illustration of a *parochia* where the evidence indicates that the church which had been the parochial minster, Cheddar, is being side-lined in favour of Wedmore (see Costen 2011, 219, figure 10.7). It is of note that Cheddar had been included in King Alfred's will (charter S1507 873 x 888) but in 1066/86 Wedmore was recorded as being one 'member' of Cheddar (*DB* 1,2) and was held by Bishop Giso of Wells from the king (*DB* 1,2).

The *parochia* surrounding Burnham and South Brent provides a good example of how ownership of an important church, South Brent, by Glastonbury Abbey appears to have nullified the process, seen across Somerset, by which a royal *villa* acquired a minster. Indeed, by 1066 Burnham, which is identified as a royal *villa,* was not held by the royal family (*DB* 24,27) and a century and a half earlier it had been included in King Alfred's will (charter S1507 873 x 888). In 1086 Burnham was only valued at £4 and was held by Walter of Douai (*DB* 24,27) which clearly shows it was no longer a royal *villa*.

8.2.12   *Parochial minsters – can they be identified from the Domesday Survey?*

Only 23 (56%) of the parochial minsters which have been identified are evidenced in the Domesday Survey. Another four churches are included in the survey but these have been identified as initial minsters: '[*Horsey*] *Pignes*' (*DB* 46,6; Thorn and Thorn 1980, 331 , 46,6), Long Ashton (*DB* 5,34), Muchelney Abbey (*DB* 9,1) and Northover (*DB* 8,37). None of these had parochial status in 1086. Therefore, the Domesday Survey in 1066/86 provides evidence for 28 churches in Somerset, but critically there is no evidence for 18 (43.9 %) parochial minsters in 1086. This underlines the significance of ensuring that the weighting used in constructing the importance criteria appropriately off-sets the lack of Domesday Survey evidence for some churches (see Criteria 9 and 11 in Section 4.3.1). It is possible that a change in status within some *parochiae*, for example North Cadbury and Winsford, is reflected by the Domesday Survey in that it does not record any churches within these *parochiae.*

It appears that when an initial minster was still providing the religious focal point within a *parochia* it was recorded in the Domesday Survey. This explains why the three initial minsters, '[*Horsey*] *Pignes*', Long Ashton and Northover are evidenced in the survey. In Cannington *parochia* both Cannington and '[*Horsey*] *Pignes*' churches are recorded in 1066/86, albeit that the latter is only fully recorded in the Exon Domesday (Thorn and Thorn 1980, 331, 46,6). It is of note that whereas '[*Horsey*] *Pignes*' church was held by Brictric in 1066 it was held by the king in 1086 (*DB* 46,6). This is another example of the king gaining control of what had been an important church. In Bedminster *parochia*, which is

discussed below, both Bedminster and Long Ashton churches are recorded in the Domesday Survey. Within the Somerton *parochia* the only church named in the survey is at Northover; it is identified as an initial minster serving the nearby royal *villa* at Queen Camel.

By 1086 Somerton church had been downgraded. This probably occurred in the late-ninth century but was recorded in either 894 or 994 AD (charter S832a) when Somerton church was stripped of its tithes because they were granted to Athelney Abbey. This grant was followed by others that also stripped income from Somerton church (Bath *Acta* 95, 146, 181a, 239). However, it is important to note that the importance score for both Somerton and Northover churches is 14 and that Somerton meets all three of the minster criteria and six or seven of the parochial minster criteria while the equivalent scores for Northover are 1 and 3 for the parochial minster criteria. The distinguishing factors between Somerton and Northover are that it was Somerton, held by the king, which is the first place named in the Domesday Survey (*DB* 1,1). It gave its name to a hundred (Thorn and Thorn 1980, 407); and was the central place within a large royal estate (Richardson 2003e, 3).

It is evident that although the evidence of churches in the Domesday Survey is important it cannot in general be used to identify early medieval parochial minsters. It is a good indicator and in some *parochiae* it provides key evidence relating to changes in the status of churches, but the survey evidence showing which churches existed in 1086 is clearly incomplete.

8.3   CASE STUDIES

The twelve case studies discussed below fully explore the evidence, or indeed lack of evidence, in relation to the various trajectories by which the Church developed in Somerset. They have been chosen to illustrate the range of trajectories by which Somerset's early medieval *parochiae* evolved and are shown in Figure 8.1. Table 8.1 enables the characteristics of all the parochial minsters to be compared to the minsters discussed in the case studies. All the data considered in the case studies is derived from Appendix 9 which includes information about the key churches in Somerset.

Each case study considers the churches that have an importance rating of 1 or more within the *parochia* being discussed. The aim is to show the variety and complexity of the trajectories of Church development and to illustrate the characteristics of churches within individual *parochia*. Using historical evidence it is possible to understand how one church could lose pre-eminence, such as Somerton, and another, such as Northover, could gain it. In addition to using historical evidence, the topographical and, to a limited extent, the morphological, characteristics of the churches will also be considered. Reference will be made to the three categories of church sites that have been previously identified: post-Roman religious sites, initial minsters, and parochial minsters.

The case studies clearly show that for some churches the evidence is far from complete and that occasionally it is necessary to reach a conclusion based on incomplete information. Sometimes this is because a place was not included in the Domesday Survey or because there is no *c.*1291 *Taxatio* record for the church or whether a place can be identified as a royal *villa*. In other cases it has not been possible to be certain how a church should be classified; for example whether Binegar and Frome should be classified as initial minsters. The intention is to be as precise as possible in how places and churches are classified but when the evidence is frequently inadequate that has not always been possible. However, as discussed above, most of the churches classified as parochial minsters meet, or score highly, against the eight minster criteria. Furthermore, it is only parochial minsters which have a high score against the criteria.

8.3.1 *The characteristics of parochial minsters and their relationship to other churches within their parochia*

The twelve case studies discussed below equate to approximately 29% of Somerset's *parochiae*. They were selected to ensure that there was at least one *parochia* chosen from the majority of the twelve early great estates which has ensured that *parochiae* have been chosen from across the county (Figure 8.1). In addition, they have been specifically chosen to provide examples of the various trajectories of Church development that exist in Somerset. The case

studies have been organised so that the most straightforward examples are discussed first with the latter ones illustrating how the process by which the Church evolved was sometimes interrupted or thwarted. The case studies show very clearly the extent to which churches on or near post-Roman religious sites were the fundamental building blocks in establishing the structure of Somerset's early medieval Church.

Where there is no doubt that a church was a parochial minster their score against the eight parochial minster criteria ranges from 5 for Stogursey church to 8 for Bedminster, Chewton Mendip, Crewkerne and Frome churches. In *parochia* where the historical evidence indicates that a process of transition was in progress, or had taken place, the lowest score against the eight parochial minster criteria is 2. This is for Long Ashton church which is identified as an initial minster. There is evidence of a church at Long Ashton in 1066/86 (*DB* 5,34) and it had a *Taxatio* value of £11 6s 8d; evidence of its importance before being succeeded by Bedminster church. The *parochia* is named after Bedminster church as it too is recorded in the Domesday Survey (*DB* 1,7) but it had the higher *Taxatio* value of £52 0s 0d. Bedminster church scores 8 against the parochial minster criteria and 3 against the minster criteria, whereas Long Ashton church scores 2 and 1 respectively. In the other case studies of *parochiae* in transition the scores against the parochial minster criteria are between 4 and 6. For example, in Winsford *parochia* Winsford church scores 5 and Kingsbrompton [Brompton Regis] church scores 4, and in Cheddar *parochia* both Cheddar and Wedmore churches score 6. It should be noted that within all the case study *parochiae* no church, other than a parochial or possible parochial minster, scores more than 4. The churches that score 4 are:

- Burnham which was a royal *villa* which apparently did not acquire a minster and was held in 1066/86 by a lay holder (*DB* 24,27);
- Wellington which was neither a royal *villa* nor a minster but was held by the Bishop of Wells in 1066/86 (*DB* 6,7); and
- Wiveliscombe which is identified as an initial minster and was held by the Bishop of Wells in 1066/86 (*DB* 6,6).

None of these three churches are evidenced in the Domesday Survey.

Apart from Long Ashton church, discussed above, and the churches identified as parochial minsters, the only churches discussed below which have a score of 2 or more against the eight parochial minster criteria are:

- Berrow possibly originating as a monastic hermitage, scores 3;

- Huntspill identified as on a post-Roman site and an initial minster, scores 2;

- Kilton identified as a royal *villa*, scores 2;

- Mark identified as a possible initial minster, scores 6;

- Moorlinch identified as on a post-Roman site and an initial minster, scores 2;

- St Michael's church Nether Stowey identified as on a post-Roman site, scores 1 or possibly 2;

- Street identified as a monastic settlement and a possible initial minster, scores 3 or possibly 4;

- Walton may have been a planned minster settlement by Glastonbury Abbey; it was the most important place within Butleigh *parochia* based on value in 1086, scores 2;

- Wanstrow identified as a possible initial minster, scores 2; and

- West Buckland, presumed to be within Wellington in 1066/86, identified as on a post-Roman site and a possible initial minster, scores 9 using some evidence relating to Wellington.

It is therefore clear that, even when a church was not a parochial minster, scoring it against the eight parochial minster criteria can assist in understanding the relationships which existed between churches within a *parochia*.

Through identifying the early medieval parochial minsters in Somerset it is possible to determine the extent to which they subsequently became mother-churches and also the extent to which the settlement around them developed into a successful medieval town. In addition, by identifying the parochial minsters which subsequently lost their pre-eminence, it is possible to understand the extent to which many pre-eminent early medieval settlements in Somerset, such as Ilchester, failed to remain as stable central places within the landscape.

8.3.2   *Crewkerne parochia*

Crewkerne is a good example of a *parochia* which had a relatively simple development trajectory (Table 8.3). Crewkerne is identified as a royal *villa* with three post-Roman church sites to the north of it; the distribution of the key churches in the *parochia* is shown in Figure 8.2. There is no church now at Easthams but in the fourteenth century it was a chapel of Crewkerne (*Ralph*, Vol. 2, 528). In 1086 there was a mill at Eastham manor (Richardson 2003c, 6) and there was evidence of a sizeable village (Collinson 1791, Vol. 2, Editor's note on page 160). The most likely site for Eastham church is on a high point to the north-east of Crewkerne (ST449 100). The site was always part of the rectory of Crewkerne and is now the town's cemetery. Merriott is identified as the initial minster as it had a *Taxatio* value of £13 6s 8d.
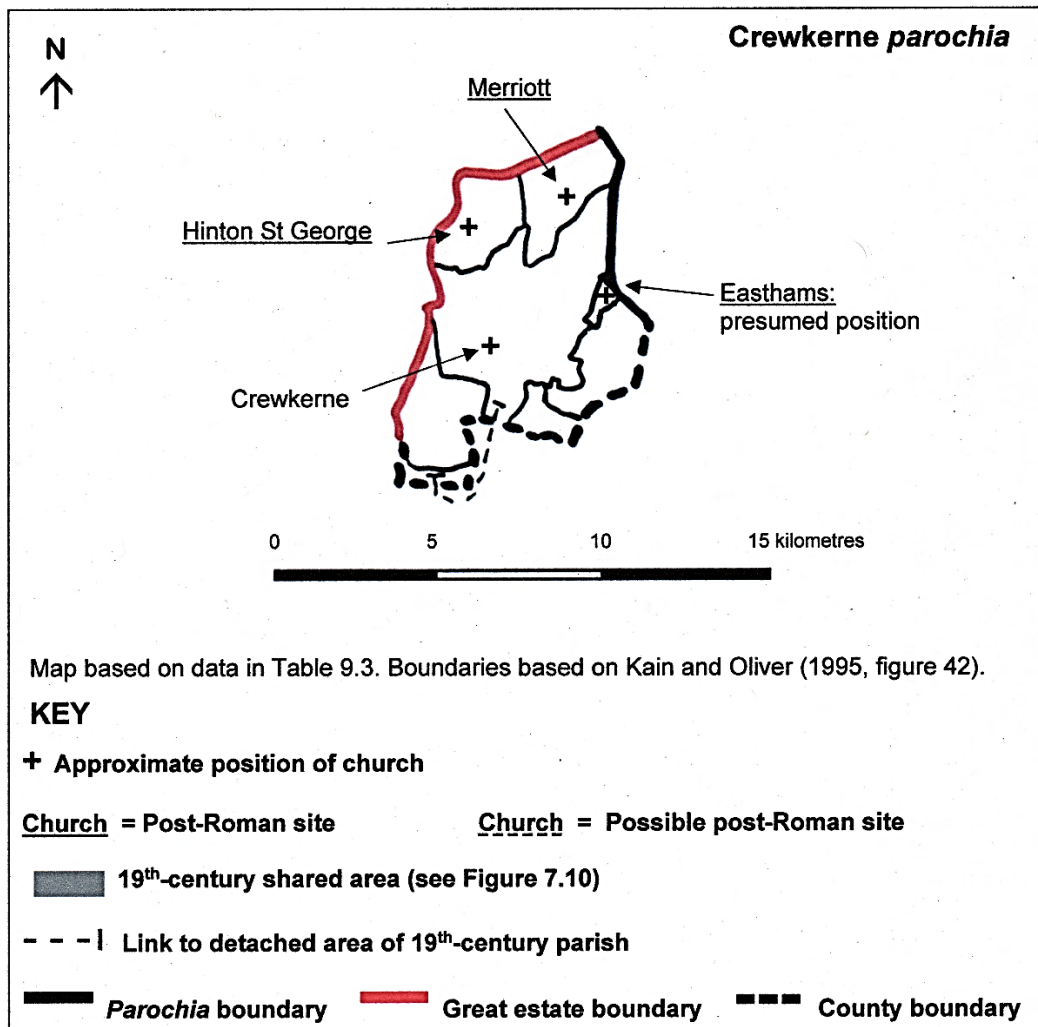

Figure 8.2 *Crewkerne parochia.*

Crewkerne church sits within a planned settlement (Aston 1984, 176; Richardson 2003c, 5-6; see Figure 7.6) and it is probable that it superseded the church at Easthams. The planned layout around Crewkerne church has some similarities to those around Milborne Port and Milverton (see Figure 5.3) churches, both of which have also been identified as parochial minsters. However, when the layouts around Crewkerne, Milborne Port and Milverton are directly compared (see Figure 5.3) their differences in both size and shape are clearly noticeably. Crewkerne church had the high *Taxatio* value of £50 13s 4d; it has the high importance rating of 18 and meets the three minster criteria and the eight parochial minster criteria. In the fourteenth century Crewkerne paid the high Lay Subsidy Return of £137-88 and is deemed to have been a sixteenth-century market town by Everitt (1967). Crewkerne was, and remains, a fixed central place within the landscape. It is of note that Merriott was also to a degree a central place as it included an important church into the early medieval period and in the fourteenth century it paid a Lay Subsidy Return of £80 (Letters 2010).

Table 8.3.   Crewkerne parochia.

Church	Topogr-aphical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
St Bartholomew Crewkerne	Side of hill	-	-	MRV	18H	3 8	YES	£50 13s 4d H	£137-88 H MT
Easthams (no church)	If on site of land held as part of Crewkerne rectory was top of hill	YES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
St George Hinton St George	High point	YES	-	-	5	-	-	£6 13s 4d	-
All Saints Merriott	Local high point or promont-ory	YES	YES	-	4	1 1	-	£13 6s 8d	£80-00

KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.

The Domesday Survey evidence for Crewkerne clearly shows that it was an important royal *villa* as it was never taxed and the number of hides there was not known; it had land for 40 ploughs and paid £46 in white silver (*DB* 1,20). In 1066 it was held by Edeva, daughter of Earl Godwin and in 1086 it was held by the king (*DB* 1,20). The only evidence for Crewkerne church having chapels dates from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

It is probable that the area now occupied by Crewkerne was always significant given that it was surrounded by at least three post-Roman churches. However, there are no indications of a settlement at Crewkerne pre-dating the establishment of the royal *villa* by Wessex (Richardson 2003c, 3) within which the parochial minster was then established. Crewkerne later developed into a medieval town and remains an important urban settlement.

8.3.3   *Milverton parochia*

The next *parochia* to be discussed is that for Milverton which is also within a planned rectilinear road layout (Aston 1984, 185-6; Gathercole 2003d, 7; see Figures 5.3, 7.9). Milverton *parochia* is sited in the western section of the river Tone valley; the eastern section formed the Taunton *parochia*. The distribution of the key churches in the *parochia* is shown in Figure 8.3. Seven post-Roman church sites are identified within it, including Milverton church (Table 8.4). In addition, Langford Budville church is identified as being on or close to a post-Roman religious site as discussed in Chapter 6. None of the post-Roman sites, other than at Milverton, score more than 1 against both the three minster criteria and the eight parochial minster criteria.

West Buckland church (see Figure 4.7), which is on top of a hill is identified as on a post-Roman site. West Buckland is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey and the value of the church is not stated in the *Taxatio*, it is therefore impossible to know how it should be classified. Wiveliscombe church is identified as an initial minster; it is adjacent to what was a manor house belonging to the Bishop of Wells. Wiveliscombe church was prebendal and had a *Taxatio* value of £31 0s 0d. It meets all three minster criteria but only four of the parochial minster criteria.

Milverton church had a *Taxatio* value of £44 13s 4d, the highest value in the *parochia*; it also meets all the minster criteria and scores 7 against the parochial minster criteria. There is Domesday evidence for Milverton church (*DB* 16,4) which, as discussed above, is an indicator of a parochial minster. In 1066 Milverton was held by Queen Edith (*DB* 1,26) but there is an extant charter dated 1061 x 1066 (charter S1240) by which Queen Edith declares that Bishop Giso of Wells is to have the land at Milverton, and this is recorded in the Domesday Survey (*DB* 6,18). The implication is therefore that Milverton was no longer deemed an important royal holding. Indeed, the main entry for Milverton (*DB* 1,26) details a relatively small holding which paid £12.
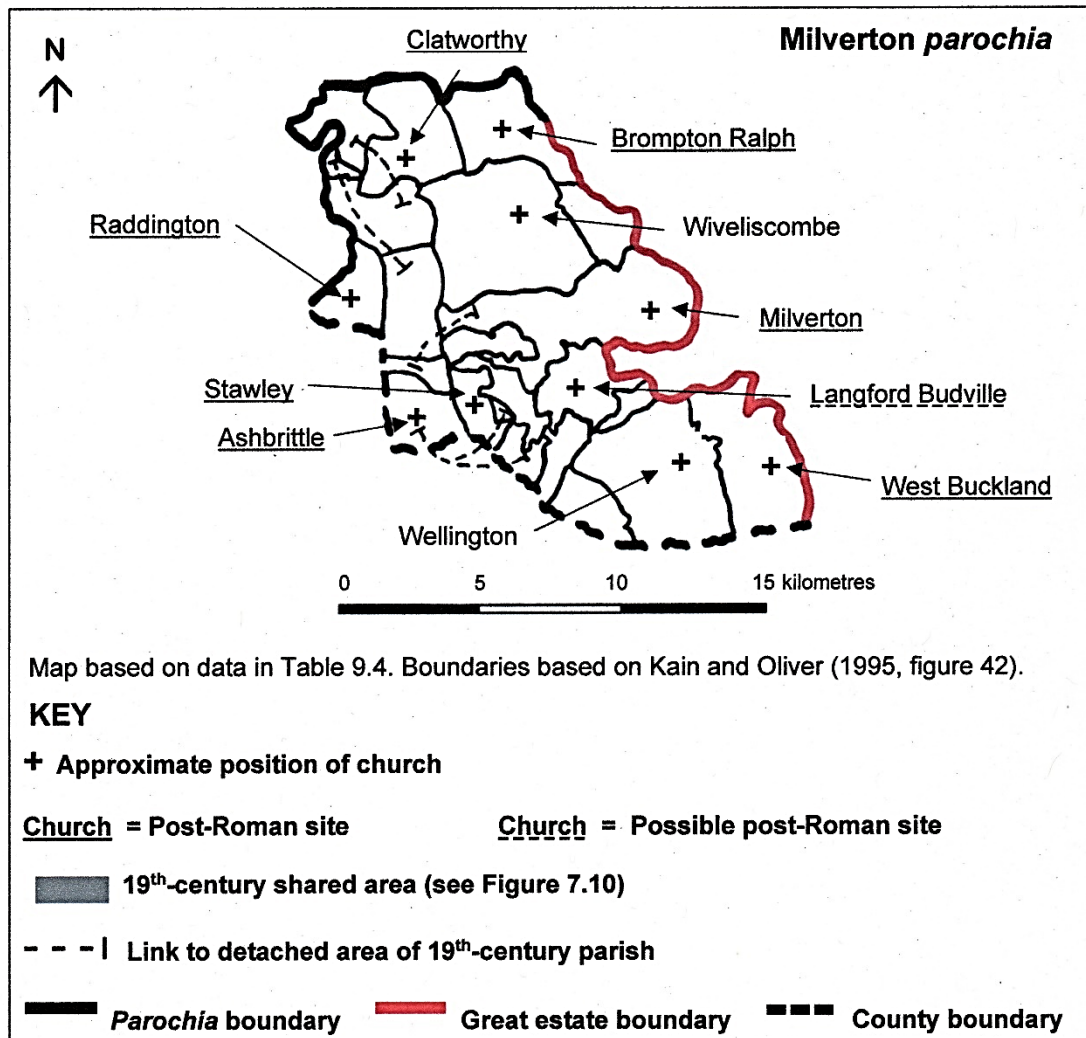

Figure 8.3. *Milverton parochia.*

Table 8.4. *Milverton parochia.*

Church	Topographical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church importance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most important place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
St John the Baptist Ashbrittle	Promontory + side of hill	YES	-		1	-	-	£10 0s 0d	-
Assumption of our Blessed Virgin Mary Brompton Ralf	Promontory + side of hill	YES	-		4	1 1	-	£6 13s 4d	-
St Mary Magdalene Clatworthy	Promontory + side of hill	YES	-		3	1 1	-	£5 0s 0d	-
St Peter Langford Budville	Promontory + ? top of hill + high point	YES	-		4	1 1	-	-	-
St Michael Milverton	High point + side of hill	YES	-	MRV	16H	3 7	-	£44 13s 4d H	£57-50 MT
St Michael Raddington	Promontory above village in low-lying landscape	YES	-	-	5	-	-	-	-
St Michael Stawley	? promontory + side of hill	YES	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
St Mary Wellington	Side of hill but flat site	-	-	-	14	3 6	YES	Part of Combe prebend	£21-50 MT
St Mary West Buckland	High point + top of hill	YES	?YES	-	9	2 + ? 2 + ?	Within Wellington	Part of Combe prebend	-
St Andrew Wiveliscombe	Side of hill	-	YES	-	14	3 4	-	£31 0s 0d	£90-00 H MT
KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.									

In 1086 Wellington was the most important place in the *parochia*, not Milverton. It is of note that Milverton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe have all

been deemed market towns by the sixteenth century (Everitt 1967) but in the 1334 Lay Subsidy Return Wiveliscombe and its environs was valued at £90, while the value for Milverton was £57-50, and that for Wellington was £21-50 (Letters 2010; see also Gathercole 2003g, 4). Therefore, Wiveliscombe, identified as the initial minster within the *parochia* was thriving compared to both Wellington and Milverton. The latter is identified as a royal *villa* containing the parochial minster which later became the mother-church of three chapels, whereas both Wiveliscombe and Wellington each had only one chapel and the earliest indication of these is eleventh century (Table 8.1).

This *parochia* provides a good example of a post-Roman site being chosen as the site for the parochial minster which retained its importance into the thirteenth century. However, by 1086 the importance of the surrounding settlement of Milverton had declined due to the Bishop of Wells developing Wellington.

8.3.4   *Bedminster parochia*

In the Bedminster *parochia* a similar pattern of church development can be identified despite the *parochia* being much smaller than that for Milverton (Figures 8.3 and 8.4). Bedminster parish church is no longer in existence and its site is now an open space. The distribution of the key churches in the *parochia* is shown in Figure 8.4. Only three churches in the *parochia* have an importance rating (Table 8.5). Whitchurch is identified as being on a post-Roman site and an initial minster and scores 8. Long Ashton is identified as an initial minster and scores 8 and Bedminster, the parochial minster, scores 15. Bedminster meets all the minster criteria and all the parochial minster criteria and it has the highest *Taxatio* value of £52 0s 0d.

It appears likely that the initial minster at Long Ashton was superseded by a planned settlement around the parochial minster at Bedminster (Figure 8.5) as the site of St John the Baptist church was in the middle of a rectangular road layout comprising: East Street, Church Lane, Malago stream and St John's Road. The rectilinear layout is similar to that of Milborne Port (see Figure 5.3).
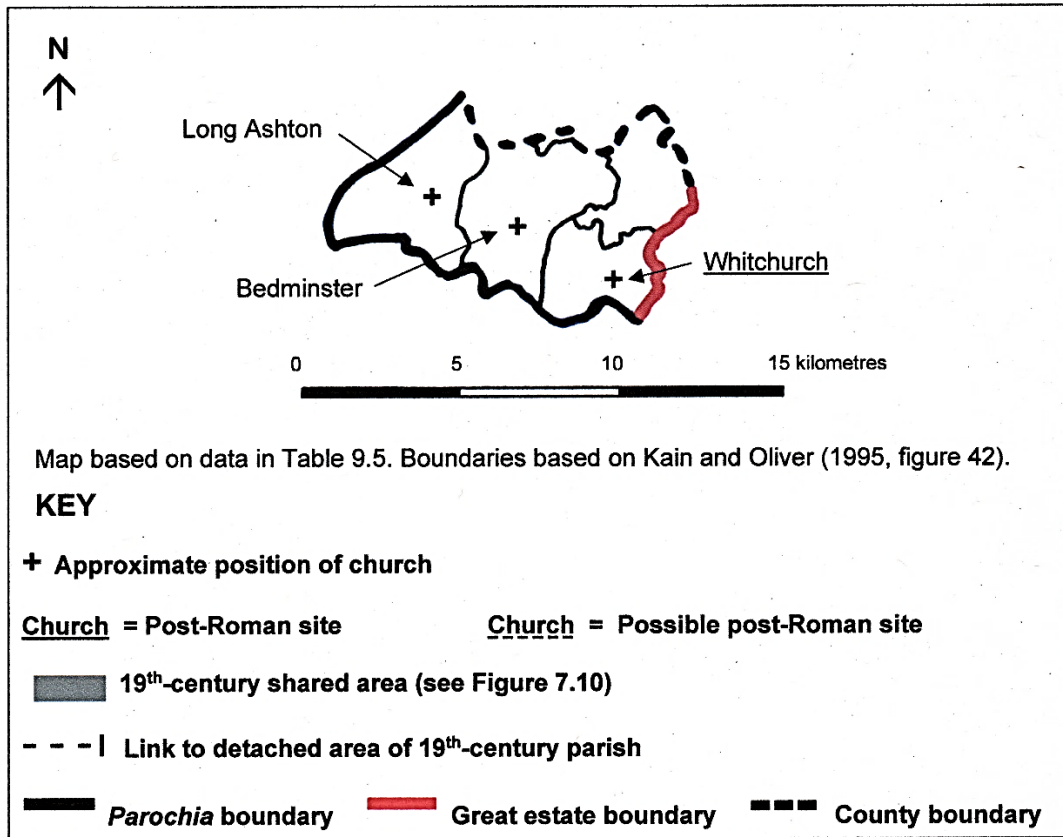
Figure 8.4. *Bedminster parochia.*

Figure 8.5. *Earliest 6 inches to the statute mile OS map of Bedminster taken from the OS map of Gloucestershire Sheet LXXV.NE; surveyed 1881-3 and published 1887. Accessed online from: https://maps.nls.uk/view/101454651.*

As discussed already, both Bedminster and Long Ashton churches are evidenced in the Domesday Survey but Bedminster church lost status before 1300 when it became a prebendal peculiar of Salisbury Cathedral (*Taxatio*, note 4). Bedminster was clearly a royal *villa* as it had never been taxed and the number of hides was not known (*DB* 1,7), whereas in 1066 Long Ashton was held as three manors with a value of £18 (*DB* 5,34). Bedminster was the most important place within the *parochia* in 1086 but it later lost significance because no Lay Subsidy Return was recorded for it in 1334 (Letters 2010) and it was not deemed a sixteenth-century market town (Everitt 1967).

Bedminster *parochia* differs from that of Milverton because its parochial minster was not established on a post-Roman site but both Milverton and Bedminster minsters continued into the thirteenth century as important churches while the settlement around them declined in importance, particularly so in the case of Bedminster as nearby Bristol developed into an important port on the river Seven with a Lay Subsidy Return in 1334 of £2,200 (Letters 2010).

Table 8.5. *Bedminster parochia.*

Church	Topogr-aphical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
St John the Baptist Bedminster (church demolished)	Side of hill + promont-ory within area of low-lying landscape	-	-	MRV	15H	3 8	YES	£52 0s 0d H	-
All Saints Long Ashton	Side of hill	-	YES	1st PM	8	1 2	- No but had the highest popul - ation	£11 6s 8d	-
St Nicholas Whitchurch	Promont-ory + side of hill	YES	YES	-	8	?1 ?1	-	£8 0s 0d	-

KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.

8.3.5   *Chewton Mendip parochia*

The parochial minster of Chewton Mendip is like Milverton in that it is identified as being on a post-Roman site (Table 8.6). The distribution of the key churches in the *parochia* is shown in Figure 8.6. The church is sited on a hill to the east of the settlement of Chewton Mendip which is in the valley below it (see Osborne and Costen 2014 and Figures 7.11a and 7.11b).
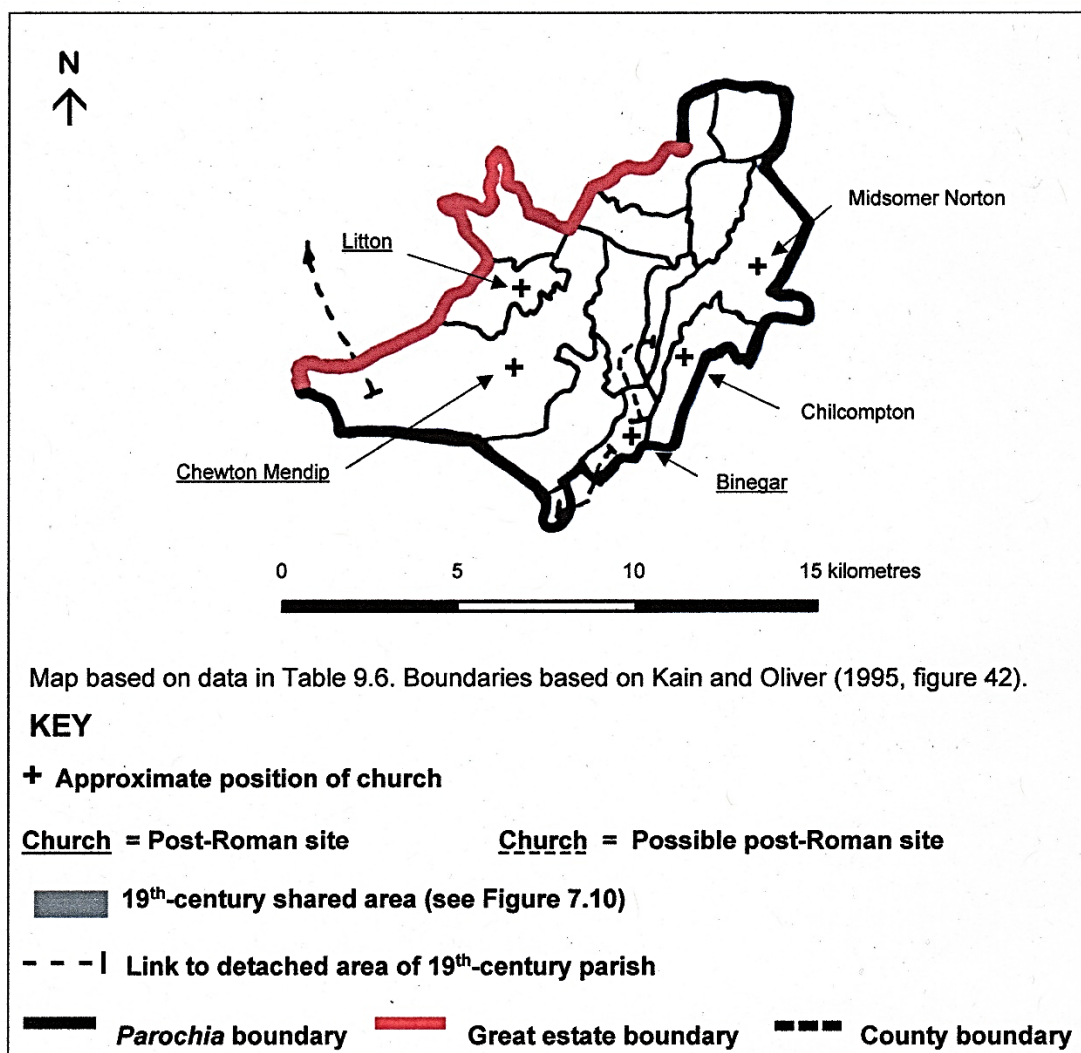

Figure 8.6.   Chewton Mendip parochia.

In addition to Chewton Mendip two other churches are on post-Roman sites, Binegar and Litton, and both have been identified as probable initial minsters (Table 8.6).

Litton church was prebendal and Binegar church was part of the Whitchurch prebend. The correlation between a church being prebendal and having a relatively high importance rating is used as part of the process to identify initial minsters, as has the holder in 1066/86. Litton in 1066/86 was held by the Bishop of Wells (*DB* 6,17) but we do not know who held Binegar as it was not included in the Domesday Survey. Midsomer Norton is also identified as a possible initial minster as it had a *Taxatio* value of £22 but who held it in 1066/86 is unknown.

Table 8.6. Chewton Mendip parochia

Church	Topographical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
Holy Trinity Binegar	High point + side of hill	YES	? YES	-	8	-	-	£5 13s 4d	In return for Whit-church
St Mary Chewton Mendip	High point + ? promontory above RV within low-lying landscape	YES	-	MRV	18H	3 8	YES	£57 19s 4d H	£90-00 H
St John the Baptist Chilcompton	Slight local high point + side of hill	-	-	-	5	?1 ?1	-	£5 0s 0d	-
St Mary Litton	High point + side of hill	YES	YES	-	10	1 1	-	£6 13s 4d	-
St John the Baptist Midsomer Norton	Local high point + side of hill		? YES	-	9	1 1	-	£22 0s 0d	£22-50
KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.									

There is no doubt that Chewton Mendip was a royal *villa* as in addition to the 14 hides which were taxed there were 15 untaxed, there was land for 40 ploughs, and it paid £30 (*DB* 1,29). In 1066 it was held by Queen Edith, which was also true of Milverton, and in 1086 by the king. This pattern, of King William resuming control of important churches, has previously been discussed in

Chapters 4 and 5. Chewton Mendip church had six chapels which were first recorded in the twelfth century (Appendix 4).

Both Chewton Mendip and Milverton parochial minsters are identified here as being on post-Roman sites, both are evidenced in the Domesday Survey (*DB* 1,29; 16,4), and both churches retained their importance into the thirteenth century. However, whereas Milverton became a successful sixteenth-century market town Chewton Mendip, despite having a Lay Subsidy Return in 1334 of £90, subsequently lost status and did not (Letters 2010). Chewton Mendip is therefore a good example of a parochial minster adjacent to a royal *villa* which did not develop into a long-standing urban settlement.

8.3.6 *Frome parochia*

Frome parochial minster is also identified as being on a post-Roman site. It may have been an initial minster as Costen (2011, 205; see also Gathercole 2003a, 4, 11-2) has stated that St Aldhelm, who died in 709 or 710, founded a monastery at Frome. It was a royal *villa* as it was held in 1066/86 by the king, it was never taxed, and the number of hides is not known, it had land for 50 ploughs and paid £53 0s 5d (*DB* 1,8). Frome church is evidenced in the Domesday Survey (*DB* 16,1) and was valued at £33 13s 4d in *c.*1291. The distribution of the key churches in the *parochia* is shown in Figure 8.7 and details given in Table 8.7.

One other church, Rode, is identified as being on a post-Roman site and Beckington and Lullington may also have been. Wanstrow is classified as an initial minster. In 1066/86 it was held from the bishop of Wells by the canons of St Andrews (*DB* 6,16) and the indications are that it was later annexed to a prebend (*Taxatio*); it was valued in *c.*1291 at £12 (*Taxatio*). Wanstrow church has an importance rating of 9 and meets 2 of both the minster and the parochial minster criteria. Frome has an importance rating of 18 and meets all the minster and parochial minster criteria. It had four chapels but there is only twelfth-century evidence for one at Egford; evidence for the others is from the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Frome thrived as a settlement and had a 1334 Lay Subsidy Return of £129-99 and Everitt (1967) has identified it as a

sixteenth-century market town. Frome is therefore another parochial minster sited on a post-Roman site around which a commercially successful town developed.

N

Rode

Lullington

Beckington

Frome

Nunney

Wanstrow

| 0 | 5 | 10 | 15 kilometres |

Map based on data in Table 9.7. Boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

KEY

+ Approximate position of church

Church = Post-Roman site   Church = Possible post-Roman site

19th-century shared area (see Figure 7.10)

- - - | Link to detached area of 19th-century parish

Parochia boundary   Great estate boundary   County boundary
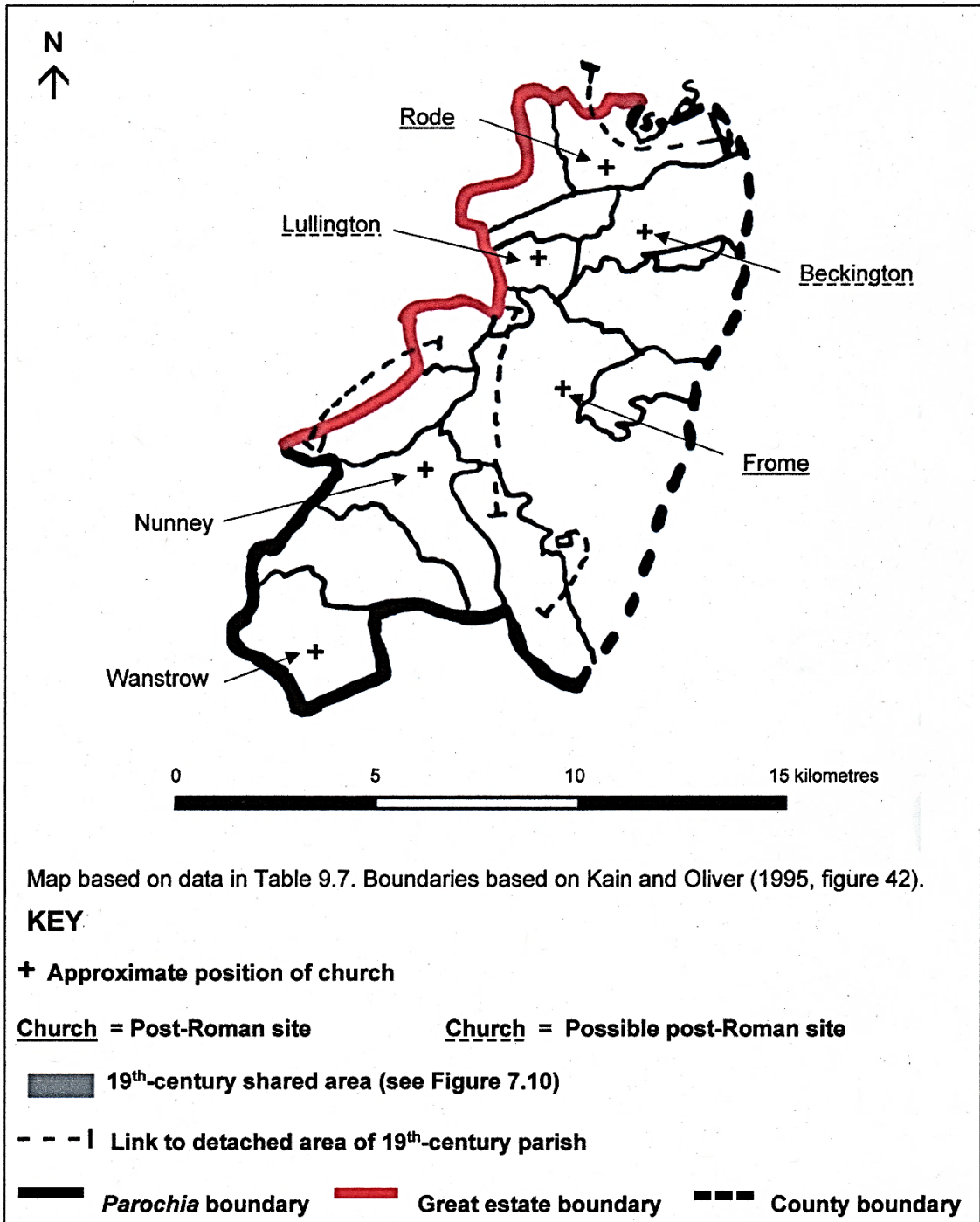
Figure 8.7.   Frome parochia.

Table 8.7. *Frome parochia.*

Church	Topogr-aphical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
St Gregory Beckington	? High point above low-lying landscape	?YES	-	-	5	-	-	£11 13s 4d	£10-50
St John the Baptist Frome	Promont-ory + side of hill	YES	?YES	MRV	18H	3 8	YES	£33 13s 4d H	£129-94 H MT
All Saints Lullington	High point + ? top of hill	?YES	-	-	6	-	-	£6 0s 0d	-
St Peter & All Saints Nunney	Slight high point above low-lying landscape	-	-	-	5	1 1	-	£11 6s 8d	£60-00
St Lawrence Rode	Promont-ory	YES	-	-	6	-	-	£4 13s 4d	£61-50
St Mary Wanstrow	Side of hill above low-lying landscape	-	YES	-	9	2 2	-	£12 0s 0d	-

KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.

8.3.7   *South Brent parochia*

The most important landholder in the *parochia* of South Brent [Brent Knoll] was Glastonbury Abbey which held the parochial minster; this is sited on or near a post-Roman site on Brent Knoll hill (Figure 7.26). The distribution of the key churches in the *parochia* of South Brent is shown in Figure 8.8. There are six churches within the *parochia* with an importance score (Table 8.8), the most significant is at South Brent which scores 17. The church scores 2 or possibly three against the three minster criteria and 6 or possibly 7 against the parochial minster criteria; the reason that the scores are not definitive is that South Brent church was prebendal and therefore its value is not known. It is impossible to know if South Brent church was worth more than £13 but it is highly likely, and it

is probably the church named at Brent in the Domesday Survey (*DB* 8,33), rather than East Brent church which was not prebendal and had a lower importance score of 11.
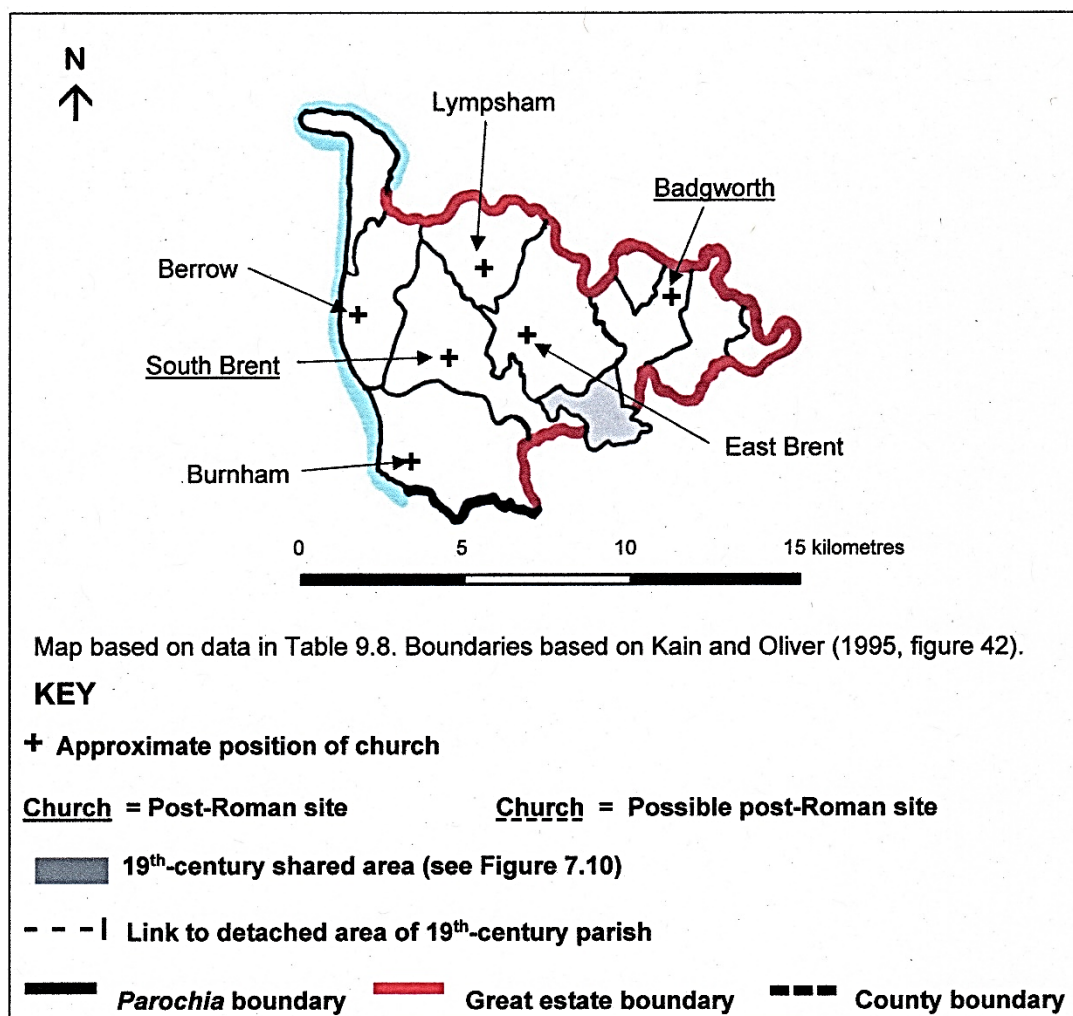
Figure 8.8.   *South Brent parochia.*

It is likely that South Brent church was always the dominant church within the *parochia* and would have been adopted as the initial minster to serve the royal *villa* at Burnham. It is doubtful if Burnham ever acquired a minster because it was included in King Alfred's will (charter S1507), and in 1066/86 had a lay landholder (*DB* 24, 27). However, it was Burnham and its environs which became commercially successful so that by 1334 it had a Lay Subsidy Return of £45 (Letters 2010).

This *parochia* illustrates how a post-Roman church was adopted as an initial minster and then, because the royal *villa* became defunct, developed into a

parochial minster. Neither South Brent nor Burnham church became mother-churches, except that the latter acquired Highbridge as a chapel in the later medieval period (Appendix 4).

Table 8.8.   South Brent parochia.

Church	Topogr-aphical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
St Congar Badgworth	Local high point / hillock	YES	-	-	4	1 / 1	-	£13 6s 8d	£18-00
St Mary Berrow	Flat site near sea	-	?YES	-	12	3 / 3	-	£16 13s 4d	-
St Andrew Burnham	Flat site near sea	-	-	RV	13	3 / 4	-	£26 13s 4d H	£45-00 H
St Mary East Brent	Bottom of hill slope	-	-	-	11	3 / 3	-	£19 9s 8d	-
St Christopher Lympsham	Flat site	-	?YES	-	10	1 / 1	-	£ 13 6s 8d	-
St Michael South Brent	Below top of hill / fort	YES	YES	PM	17H	2 + ? / 6 + ?	YES	Part of prebend	-

KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.

8.3.8   *Winsford parochia*

The next *parochia* to be discussed, that of Winsford, is an example of an important church on a post-Roman site around which a town did not develop, and one on a possible post-Roman site, Kingsbrompton [Brompton Regis] around which there was an established settlement as by 1334 it had a Lay Subsidy Return of £39 (Letters 2010).

There are many aspects of Winsford *parochia* that are quite different from those cases already discussed. Firstly, it is in west Somerset (Figure 8.1). Secondly, none of the churches within the *parochia* have a higher importance rating than 13. Thirdly, the highest score against the minster criteria is 2 and

that against the parochial minster criteria is 4. Lastly, none of the churches are evidenced in the Domesday Survey and the highest *Taxatio* value is £13 13s 4d for Winsford church which can only be described as a parochial minster and not a minster within a royal *villa*. Neither Winsford, Dulverton nor Kingsbrompton churches were mother-churches. The distribution of the key churches in the *parochia* is shown in Figure 8.9

KEY

+ **Approximate position of church**

Church = **Post-Roman site**   Church = **Possible post-Roman site**

       19th-century shared area (see Figure 7.10)

– – – **I** **Link to detached area of 19th-century parish**

       ***Parochia* boundary**   **Great estate boundary**   ■■■ **County boundary**

Map based on data in Table 9.9. Boundaries based on Kain and Oliver (1995, figure 42).

Figure 8.9.   Winsford parochia.
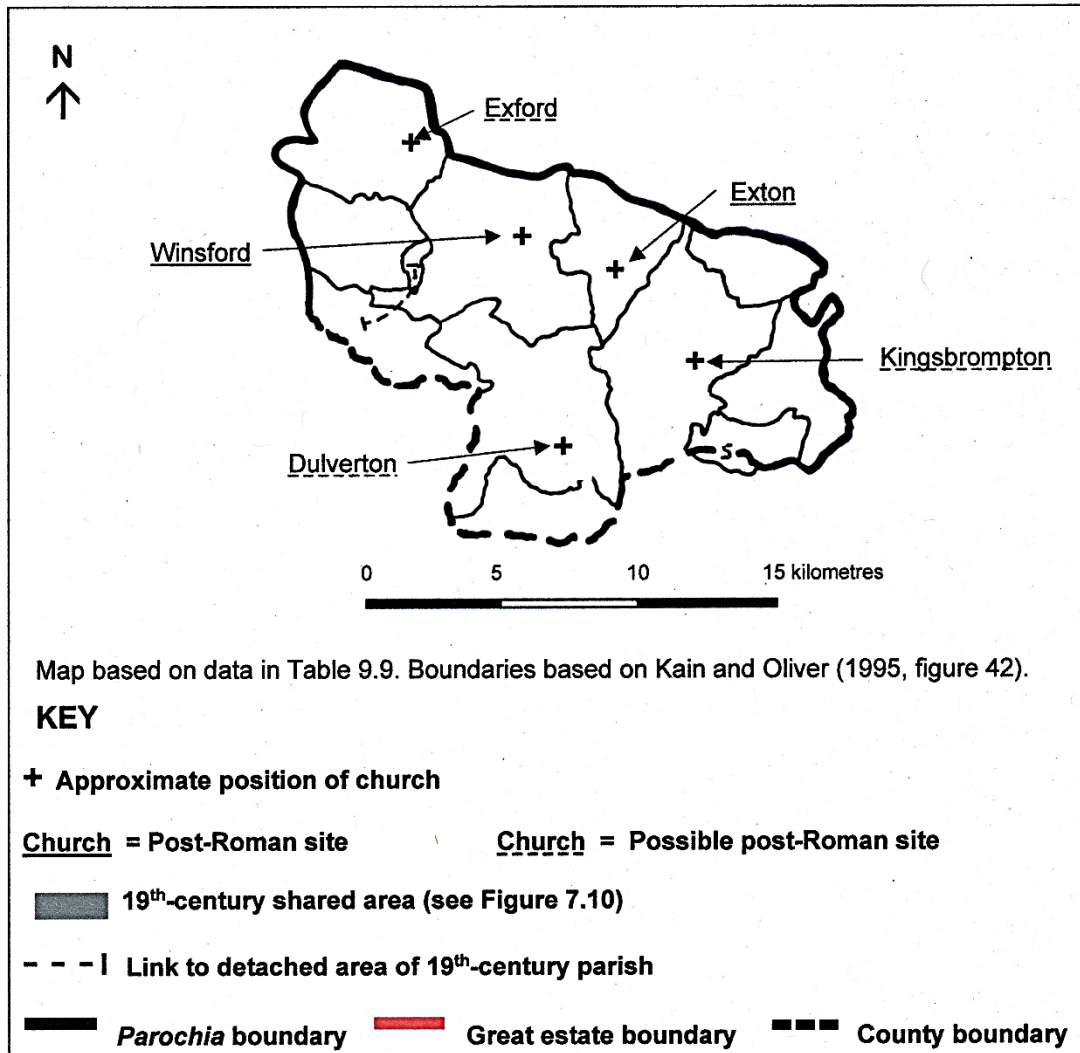
All the churches shown in Table 8.9 are either identified as on post-Roman or possible post-Roman sites and Winsford church is sited on a peninsula above the village (see Exmoor HER Nos MS08544 and MEM23579). There are indications that pre-Conquest Winsford had been an important royal estate as it paid £10 10s in white silver, there was land for 60 ploughs, but it was only taxed

on 3½ hides (*DB* 1,17). In 1066 it was held by Earl Tosti(g), brother of Harold Godwinson ('Tosti 2', Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England, http://www.pase.ac.uk, accessed 12 February 2020), and in 1086 it was held by the king (*DB* 1,17). Winsford was the second most important place in 1086, the first being Kingsbrompton which was held by Gytha in 1066 and by the king in 1086. Kingsbrompton was taxed on 10 hides, there was land for 60 ploughs, and it paid £27 12s 1d in white silver (*DB* 1,11). It had the highest population in the *parochia*, 94, whereas Winsford had 84 and Dulverton 37 (*DB* 1,11; 12; 17). The indications are that Dulverton was the least important of the three places in 1086 as it only paid tax for 2 ½ hides, had land for 11 ploughs and paid £11 10s in white silver (*DB* 1,12). All three places are identified as being 'comital' or possible 'comital' manors, while Kingsbrompton and Dulverton are identified as royal *villae*.

The evidence is far from clear but Winsford church had the highest *Taxatio* value of £13 13s 4d, the highest importance rating of 13, it meets 2 of the minster criteria and 5 of the parochial minster criteria. It is on this basis that it is identified as both an initial minster and a parochial minster serving the royal *villa* of Dulverton. As discussed in Chapter 5 royal *villae* were not necessarily stable points in the landscape, so whether Dulverton was initially the more important place is impossible to know. Dulverton sits within the Barle river valley on a site typical of a royal *villa.* Its situation is therefore quite different from Kingsbrompton or Winsford which are both on high hilly ridges the former to the north-east and the latter to the north of Dulverton.

The evidence has therefore been interpreted as showing that Winsford was the most important post-Roman church within the *parochia.* It was adopted as the initial minster serving the royal *villa* of Dulverton, but pre-Conquest the decision was made to establish or develop the settlement at Kingsbrompton and by 1334 it was the most important settlement within the *parochia*. Looking at the *c.*1840 Tithe Map for Kingsbrompton it appears that it might well have been a planned rectilinear settlement. Consequently, Dulverton was downgraded and indeed by 1086 the customary due paid by Brushford to Dulverton had been taken away (*DB* 1,12) and Kingsbrompton was clearly in the ascendant. Both Dulverton and Kingsbrompton paid the Lay Subsidy Return in 1334;

Kingsbrompton £39 and Dulverton £31-50 (Letters 2010). However, it is Dulverton which was deemed a market town in *c.*1600 by Everitt (1967) and which today is a thriving market town while Kingsbrompton is an isolated small village. Winsford *parochia* therefore illustrates how the process which led, for example, to Frome and Crewkerne developing as parochial minsters within what was later a thriving market town, could be interrupted. The long-term commercial success of Dulverton underlines how geographical accessibility and being sited within a river valley, were ultimately more important factors in determining whether a settlement became, or remained, the most important within a *parochia*.

Table 8.9.   Winsford parochia.

Church	Topogr-aphical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
All Saints Dulverton	High point above village in low-lying valley	?YES	-	RV	8	2 3	-	£11 13s 4d	£31-50 MT
St Salvyn Exford	? promont-ory + high point + side of hill	?YES probable	-	-	4	1 1	-	£6 13s 4d	-
St Peter Exton	On bluff + side of hill	YES	-	-	6	1 1	-	£6 13s 4d	-
St Mary Kings-brompton [Brompton Regis]	Side of hill + high point	?YES	-	RV	8	2 4	YES	£10 0s 0d	£39-00 H
St Peter Winsford	Promont-ory + side of hill	YES	YES	PM	13H	2 5	-	£13 13s 4d H	-
KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.									

8.3.9   *North Cadbury parochia*

The next *parochia* to be considered is that of North Cadbury which also
illustrates how the process by which a minster was established, within or
adjacent to a royal *villa*, could be interrupted; see Figure 8.10 and Table 8.10.
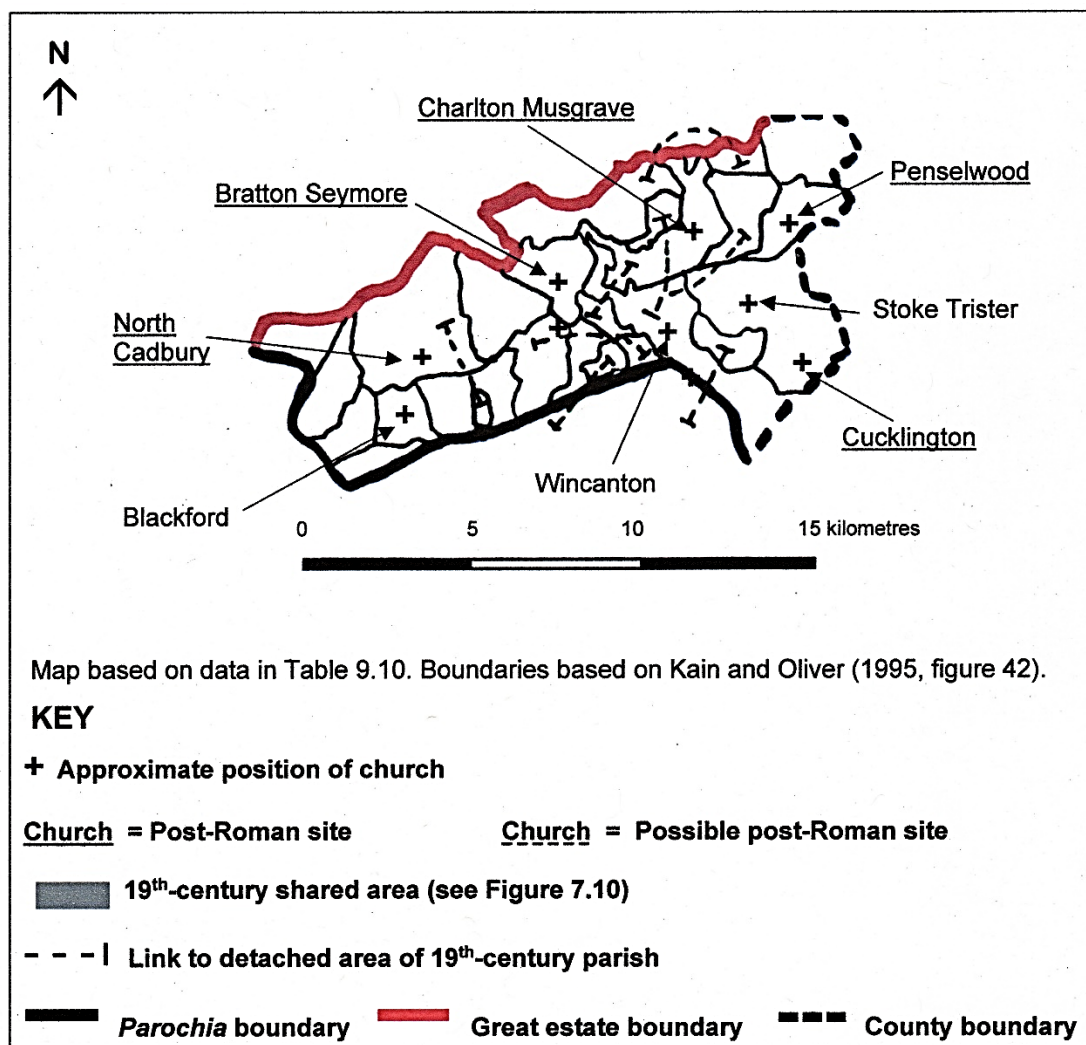
Figure 8.10.   *North Cadbury parochia.*

As with Winsford *parochia* the key churches are not mentioned in the
Domesday Survey, and none were prebendal or mother-churches. In addition,
there are no significant royal or ecclesiastical holdings in 1066/86 but 4 hides
are recorded in Blackford. By the late thirteenth century a chapelry of Maperton
(*Taxatio*) was held by the Abbot of Glastonbury (*DB* 8,9). The church with the
highest importance score is Blackford with a score of 6, but 3 of those points
are due to it being held by Glastonbury whereas the other two significant

churches, North Cadbury and Wincanton both had lay holders in 1066/1086 (*DB* 36,5; 24,16).

Five churches are identified as being on post-Roman sites; none of them were prebendal or were appropriated. Of these, one church stands out in the *parochia*, North Cadbury, which in the fifteenth century probably housed a college of priests (Orbach and Pevsner 2014, 486-7; Som. HER No. 54345). It had the highest *Taxatio* value of £13 6s 8d and North Cadbury scores 4 and Wincanton 3 against the parochial minster criteria, but both churches only score 1 against the minster criteria. North Cadbury church is sited locally on a slight high point (77.96 metres above sea level) compared to the village (*c.*65-70 metres) but within the wider landscape it is very much on a high point looking down on a valley (*c.*49 metres). Both North Cadbury, because of its *Taxatio* value, and Stoke Trister, because of its location on the side of a hill, are identified as possible initial minsters.

There is no clear evidence as to which places were royal *villae* within the *parochia*. However, the two most likely are Blackford and Wincanton. Blackford was granted by the king to Glastonbury Abbey in the mid-tenth century (charters S1757 and S1768) and is in valley near a stream. Wincanton is close to a river within a low-lying landscape and it takes its name from the river Wincawel. Blackford comprised two manors paying tax on 5 hides in total with land for 7 ploughs and a total value of £5 (*DB* 8,9; 36,8). Wincanton paid tax on 4 hides, had land for 12 ploughs and paid £5 10s; it was held in 1086 by Walter of Douai (*DB* 24,16). The most important place based on population in 1086 was Wincanton with 49, while North Cadbury had a population of 43 but on value North Cadbury was the most important being valued at £20 in 1066 and £12 in 1086 (*DB* 24,16; 36,5).

Therefore, the three churches within the *parochia* which had any significance were Blackford, North Cadbury and Wincanton and all have extremely low scores compared to significant churches in other *parochia*. Indeed, the scores against all the criteria are particularly low within the Wincanton *parochia*. The only evidence which may provide a clue is that all the parishes within the *parochia* are relatively small, except for Cucklington (Figure 8.10). There is

physical evidence that many of the churches within the *parochia* were in existence by the twelfth century (see Figure 3.8) and all the nineteenth-century parishes are named in the Domesday Survey.

Table 8.10.   North Cadbury parochia.

Church	Topogr-aphical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
St Michael Blackford	In valley on flat area near stream	-	-	?RV based on locat-ion	6H	1 2	-	Within Mapert-on	-
St Giles Bratton Seymore	Just below top of hill / promontory	YES	-	-	1	-	-	£5 0s 0d	-
St Stephen Charlton Musgrave	Top of hill	YES	-	-	3	-	-	£4 3s 0d	-
St Lawrence Cucklington	Below top of hill + ? promontory	YES	-	-	3	-	-	£6 13s 4d	£60-00
St Michael North Cadbury	Slight high point locally but within landscape high point	YES	?YES	PM	4 joint	1 4	YES	£13 6s 8d H	-
St Michael Penselwood	Side of hill + ? promontory	YES	-	-	3	-	-	£4 0s 0d	-
St Andrew Stoke Trister	Demolished church – side of hill	-	YES	-	3	-	-	-	-
St Peter & St Paul Wincanton	Promontory / side of hill RV within low-lying landscape	-	-	?RV based on locat-ion	4 joint	1 3	-	£8 0s 0d	£90-00 H MT

KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.

It is notable that the parish of Wincanton has a strange irregular shape which could be described as moth-eaten. In addition, it has two detached portions and a part of what must have belonged to Wincanton is held as a detached portion by Horsington which is in the *parochia* of Milborne Port. It therefore looks as if

the original estate which was centred on Wincanton was severely reduced. Bearing in mind that in 1086 Wincanton was taxed on 3 of its 4 hides, and only had land for 12 ploughs with a total value of 110s (*DB* 24,16), it seems likely that the dismemberment of Wincanton occurred pre-Conquest and that prior to that it was a royal *villa*. There are no archaeological records for early medieval Wincanton (Somerset HER accessed 10th February 2020; see also Richardson 2003f, 5-6).

It is impossible to be certain how the Church evolved within the *parochia*, but the evidence indicates that Cucklington and North Cadbury churches, both on post-Roman sites, were initially the most important within the *parochia*. Then the most likely scenario is that North Cadbury was adopted as an initial minster while an initial minster was also established at Stoke Trister; the royal *villa* being initially at Wincanton and later at Blackford, or indeed that it was the other way round. There is no evidence that North Cadbury was ever a royal *villa*. It is impossible to judge whether a minster was ever established within, or adjacent to a royal *villa* in this *parochia*. Wincanton was clearly in the ascendant in 1086 in having the highest population of 49 (*DB* 24,16) and this continued as it, and its environs, developed commercially so that in 1334 it had a Lay Subsidy Return of £90 and in *c.*1600 was a market town (Everitt 1967).

This is a difficult *parochia* to understand given it is unclear where the royal *villa(e)* were sited and because the churches score so poorly against the criteria. It was only possible to understand the *parochia* by making comparisons with other *parochiae* where the evidence is clear-cut. This underlines the importance of using a structured assessment process so that it is possible to compare churches and compare how the Church evolved in different *parochiae*. The important finding in relation to this *parochia*, is the evidence that Cucklington church, identified as being on a post-Roman site, had the high Lay Subsidy Return in 1334 of £60 (Letters 2010). The implication is that the church, and the settlement around it, retained its post-Roman function as a central place within the landscape into the fourteenth century.

8.3.10   *Cheddar parochia*

The next *parochia* to be discussed is that of Cheddar in which it is possible to discern how the royal *villa* was initially at Wedmore and was then transferred to Cheddar (Figure 8.11). The most important churches within the *parochia* are Cheddar with a score of 14 and a *Taxatio* value of £26 13s 4d, and Wedmore with a score of 16 and a *Taxatio* value of £40. Both churches score 3 against the minster criteria and 6 against the parochial minster criteria (Table 8.11).
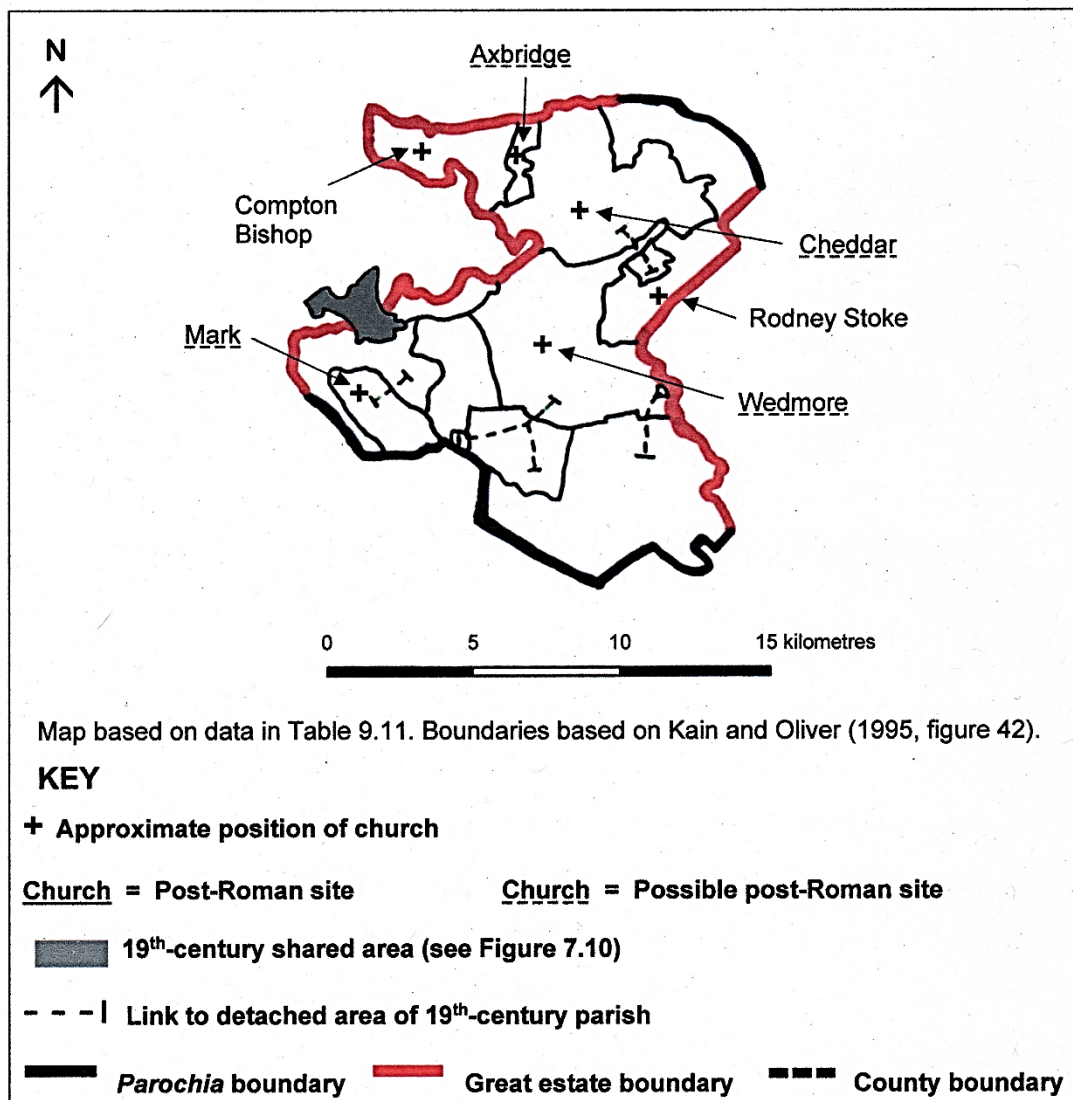

Figure 8.11.   *Cheddar parochia.*

Neither church is recorded in the Domesday Survey, but a monastic community is recorded at Cheddar in King Alfred's will (charter S1507; Blair 1996; Costen 2011, 219). The most important place in 1086 was Cheddar.

Table 8.11. *Cheddar parochia.*

Church	Topogr-aphical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 paroc-hial minster criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
St John the Baptist Axbridge	High point in middle of village	?YES		-	4	1 0	-	£4 6s 8d	£45-00 MT
St Andrew Cheddar	Flat site	-	YES	MRV	14	3 6	YES	£26 13s 4d	£40-46
St Andrew Compton Bishop	Side of hill	-	YES	-	8	1 1	-	£20 0d 0s	-
St Mark (possibly modern) Mark	Local slight high point in wetlands	-	?YES	-	6	2 2	-	-	-
St Bernard Rodney Stoke	Slight high point above wet-lands	-	-	-	5	-	-	£5 6s 8d	-
St Mary Wedmore	High point + side of hill + to a limited degree in low-lying landscape	?YES	-	RV	16H	3 6	-	£40 0s 0d H	£107-00 H
KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.									

Two churches are identified as possibly being on post-Roman sites; Axbridge and Wedmore. Whether Cheddar was a post-Roman monastic site is not determined but there was an early medieval monastery at Cheddar (Blair 1996; Costen 2011, 183). Cheddar church is identified as an initial minster. This accords with the view of Blair (1996, 119) that the establishment of a royal *villa* at Cheddar did not happen until after 920 AD. Compton Bishop church is also identified as an initial minster because of its location on the side of a hill, its

relatively high *Taxatio* value of £20, its importance score of 8, and because it was a prebendal church.

Two royal *villae* are identified in the *parochia*, Cheddar and Wedmore. John Blair (1996) has suggested that Wedmore was the original royal *villa* linked to the monastic site at Cheddar. Wedmore would also have been linked with Compton Bishop, which is to the north-west of Wedmore, while Cheddar is to the north-north-east. This pattern of a royal *villa* being between two initial minsters is a pattern seen in other *parochia* such as Shapwick (Table 8.12). The Domesday Survey evidence clearly indicates that in 1066/86 Cheddar was pre-eminent compared to Wedmore. Cheddar had never been taxed, the number of hides was not known, it had land for 20 ploughs and paid £21 0s 2 ½ at 20d to the *ora* (*DB* 1,2; 21,78). In 1086 both Wedmore and Axbridge are described as being within the manor of Cheddar (*DB* 1,2).

The initial pattern of Church development within Cheddar *parochia* appears to have been founded on two churches, Axbridge and Wedmore, both of which were possibly established on post-Roman sites. There may have been a post-Roman monastic community at Cheddar which had been adopted as an initial minster. In addition, it is likely that an initial minster was established at Compton Bishop and also possibly at Mark. The royal *villa* to which all these initial minsters would have been linked was Wedmore. Then, in the early tenth century, a royal *villa* was established at Cheddar evidenced by a royal palace having been excavated to the north of Cheddar church (Rahtz 1979; Som. HER No. 11442). However, Wedmore church has both a higher importance rating and a higher *Taxatio* value than Cheddar church despite Cheddar being the most important place within the *parochia* in 1086.

Cheddar *parochia* demonstrates the extent to which the pre-eminence of both churches and royal *villa* could fluctuate over time. Wedmore also provides another example of a post-Roman central place retaining, or possibly regaining, its importance as a central place possibly because it was held by the bishop of Wells in 1066/86 (*DB* 1,2; see also Blair 2005, 428, note 6). In 1334 Wedmore had a Lay Subsidy Return of £107. However, it was Axbridge with a return of £45 that was later deemed to be a market town by Everitt (1967).

8.3.11   *Shapwick parochia*

The next *parochia* to be considered is that of Shapwick which was mainly held by Glastonbury Abbey, as was true of South Brent *parochia* which has already been discussed. Apart from Huntspill (*DB* 24,28; 34) held in 1066/86 by lay landholders and Puriton (*DB* 11,1) held in 1066 by Queen Edith and in 1086 by the king, the rest of the *parochia* was held by Glastonbury Abbey in 1066/86. The distribution of the key churches in the *parochia* is shown in Figure 8.12.

Five churches are identified as being on post-Roman sites, including the church at Huntspill which is classified as an initial minster (Table 8.12). It has an importance score of 9. Huntspill church meets only two of the minster criteria and two of the parochial minster criteria but had a *Taxatio* value of £31 6s 8d, probably because it was neither prebendal nor appropriated. It appears that by 1066 Huntspill, despite the high *Taxatio* value of its church, was not considered significant because it comprised two manors both held by lay landholders (*DB* 24,28; 34). The other church which is classified as an initial minster is the original church at Shapwick which is identified as on a post-Roman site. The church was sited facing north on the slope of the hill to the east of the modern village of Shapwick close to Beerway Farm (ST426382). Fortunately, the site of the old Shapwick church has been extensively studied. The archaeological evidence shows that the church was established by the eighth century and in the first half of that century the land was granted by the royal family to Glastonbury Abbey (Aston and Gerrard 2013, 368). The importance, minster and parochial minster scores are given for the old church as permission to build the new church at Shapwick was only granted in 1329. The reason given for building a new church was because the existing church was some distance from the village and not convenient for the villagers (Costen 1991, 48-50; Aston and Gerrard 2013, 242). It is interesting to compare this situation with that of the old church sited on the hill above Honiton, which continued to serve the community until a new church was built in the middle of the town in the twentieth century (see Section 7.3.5).
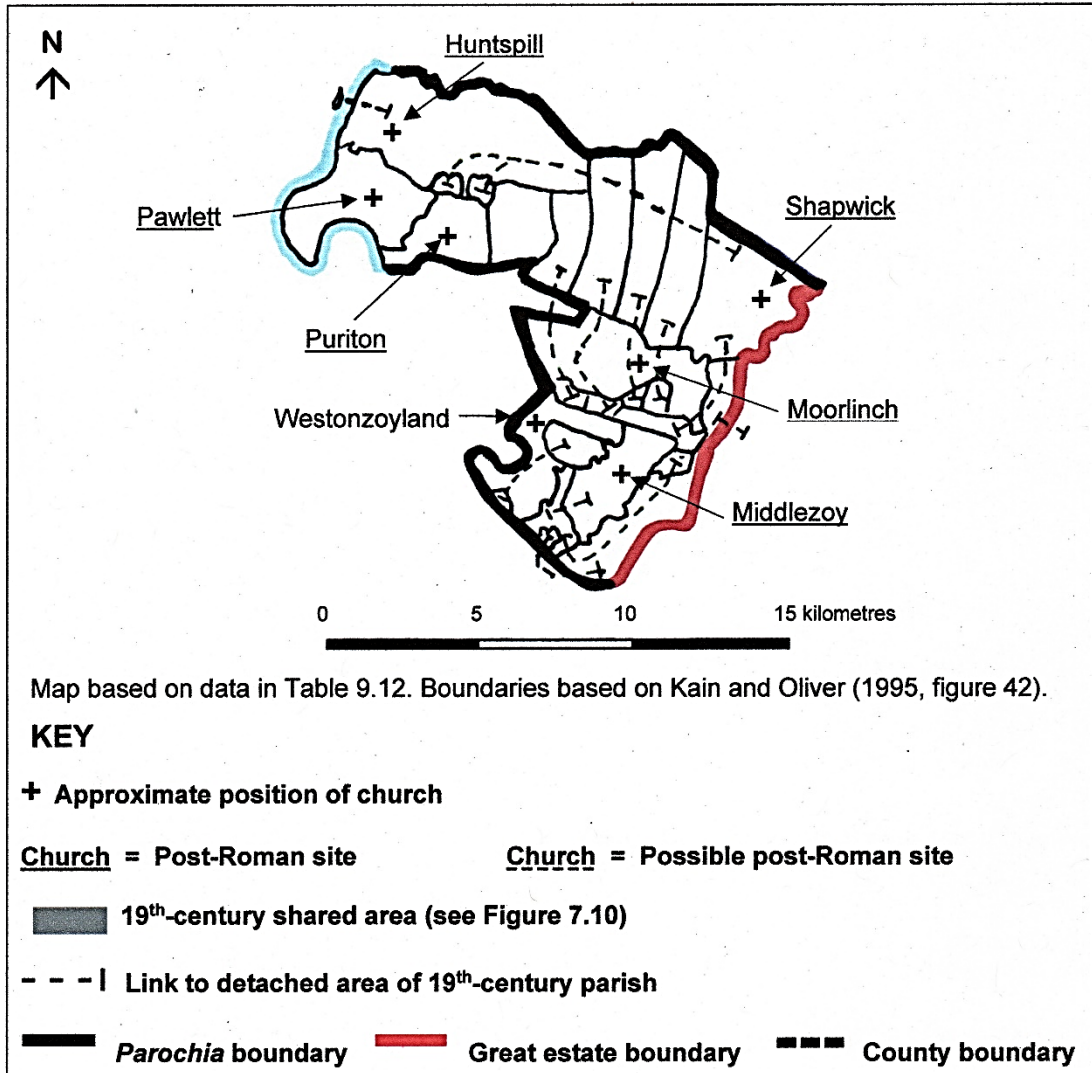
Figure 8.12. *Shapwick parochia.*

The church with the highest importance score in the *parochia* is Shapwick, it meets all three of the minster criteria and six of the parochial minster criteria. It had a *Taxatio* value of £21, which was below that for Huntspill, Moorlinch and Westonzoyland. However, because it has the highest parochial minster score it is identified as the parochial minster. It is of note that Costen (1991, 50) identified the original church at Shapwick as a probable minster due to where it was sited and that it became a medieval mother-church. Shapwick is classified as the most important place within the *parochia* in 1086.

Table 8.12.   *Shapwick parochia.*

Church	Topogr-aphical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
All Saints Huntspill	Local high point / hillock	YES	YES	-	9	2 / 2	-	£31 6s 8d	£170 H MT
Holy Cross Middlezoy (part of '*Sowy*')	High point / ? top of hill	YES	-	-	4	1 / 1	-	-	-
St Mary Moorlinch	High point	YES	YES	-	11	2 / 2	-	£25 13s 4d	-
St John the Baptist Pawlett	Promon-tory / side of hill	YES	-	-	8	1 / 1	-	£10 0s 0d	£12
St Michael Puriton	Local high point in low-lying landscape	YES	-	?RV	1	1 / 1	-	£12 6s 8d	-
Blessed Virgin Mary Shapwick (new church)	Side of hill above low-lying landscape	-	-	RV	-	-	-	-	-
St Andrew Shapwick (original church)	High up on side of hill	YES	YES	PM	15H	3 / 6	YES	£21 0s 0d	-
Westonzoyland (part of '*Sowy*')	Flat site within wetlands	-	-	-	7	2 / 1	-	£44 0s 4d H	£135-06 MT

KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.

Westonzoyland was part of the 12 hide '*Sowy*' estate held by Glastonbury Abbey; it also included Middlezoy and Othery (Costen 2011, 114). In 1189 a survey of the lands held by Glastonbury Abbey was completed for abbot Henry of Sully (Stacy 2001, 79-238). In the section on the '*Sowy*' estate Middlezoy and Othery are given individual headings but Westonzoyland is not (Stacy 2001, 135, note 2). However, by the time a survey was completed in 1198, the first entry under '*Sowy*' is Westonzoyland (Stacy 2001, 240). Therefore, it seems that the significance of Westonzoyland and its church increased post-Conquest

and it can be assumed that it is unlikely that the church was significant in the early medieval period, despite its high *c.*1291 *Taxatio* value.

The valley in which the village of Shapwick is sited is identified as the site of a possible royal *villa* based on its Domesday Survey entry of having, for example, 20 untaxed hides (*DB* 8,5) and its topographical setting within a low-lying landscape. Puriton is also identified as the possible site of a royal *villa* as it was held by Queen Edith in 1066 and the king in 1086, and because it is sited in an area of low-lying land behind what is a prominent defensive position at the end of the Polden Hills. Neither Shapwick nor Puriton became commercially successful, but Huntspill did and in 1334 it had a Lay Subsidy Return of £170 (Letters 2010). However, it was Westonzoyland, under the ownership of Glastonbury Abbey, that developed into a market town (Everitt 1967).

Shapwick *parochia* was dominated by churches on post-Roman sites, one of which, Shapwick old church, was first adopted as an initial minster before it became the parochial minster. However, it only ever acquired one chapel, Ashcott, the first evidence for which dates from the sixteenth century (Youngs 1980). Therefore, in this *parochia* neither of the possible royal *villae* acquired or were established adjacent to a minster. This illustrates how the process by which a royal *villa* acquired a minster could be interrupted.

8.3.12   *Butleigh parochia*

Within the *parochia* of Butleigh all the Domesday Survey places except for, Dundon and Littleton in Compton Dundon, and Grenton were held in 1066 by Glastonbury Abbey (*DB* 8,13; 15. 21,85), but by 1086 only Littleton was not held by the abbey (*DB* 21,85). The distribution of the key churches in the *parochia* is shown in Figure 8.13. The changing relationship between Butleigh and Street has already been discussed in Chapter 7 but by considering all the evidence Butleigh is identified as the parochial minster (Table 8.13) as its importance score is 14. It also meets all three of the minster criteria and five or possibly six of the parochial minster criteria. The topographical setting of Butleigh indicates that it was a royal *villa* as it is sited within an area of relatively low-lying land (*c.*8 metres above sea level) compared to the overall landscape. However, by

801 AD it was granted away to Eadgils by the royal family (charter S270a). By 1066 Butleigh comprised two manors, the smaller of which was held by Winegot the priest (*DB* 8,12), while Glastonbury Abbey (DB 8,18) held the main manor.
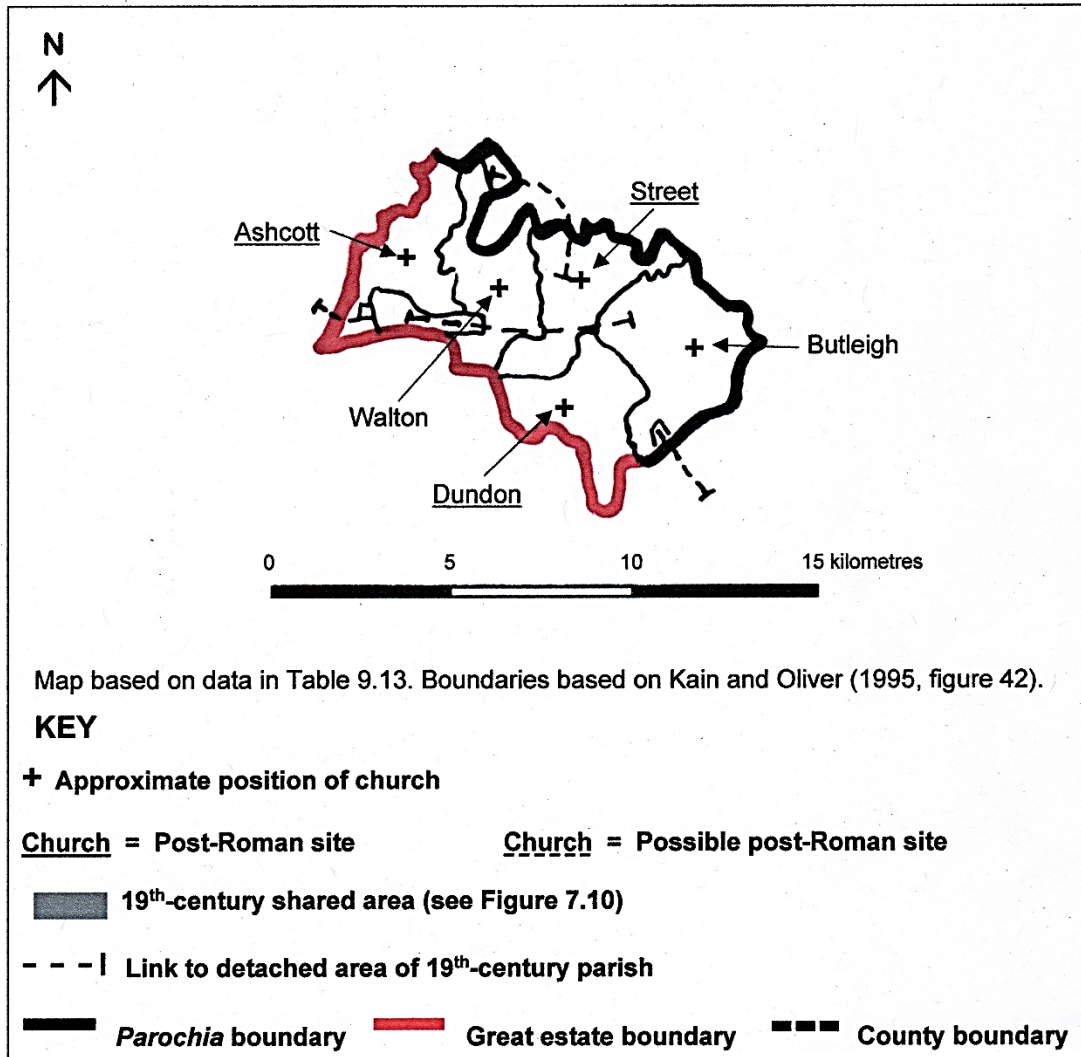
Figure 8.13.   *Butleigh parochia.*

Two post-Roman churches are identified within the *parochia*; both of which overlook the low-lying wetlands surrounding the monastic site at Street which may have been a post-Roman monastery (Gathercole 2003f). Street is identified as a possible initial minster and Dundon, one of the post-Roman churches, as an initial minster. Butleigh is identified as the parochial minster later downgraded by Glastonbury Abbey in favour of Street and/or a possible planned settlement at Walton. Glastonbury, which is relatively close to Street, had a Lay Subsidy Return of £185 (Letters 2010) and no doubt this is the reason that no settlement within the *parochia* made a Lay Subsidy Return.

Butleigh *parochia* provides more evidence of the extent to which the pre-eminence of both parochial minsters and royal *villae* was subject to change. It is important to note that Glastonbury Abbey undoubtedly played a key role in implementing those changes.

Table 8.13.   Butleigh parochia.

Church	Topogr-aphical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
All Saints Ashcott	On high bluff	YES	-	-	4	1 1	-	-	-
St Leonard Butleigh	Side of hill within a low-lying landscape	-	-	PM ?RV based on topo-graphy & RG	14H	3 5 + ?	YES on population	£15 13s 4d	-
St Andrew Dundon	High point	YES	YES	-	7	?1 ?1	-	£10 0s 0d	-
Holy Trinity Street	Flat site	-	? IM Mon.	-	11	2 + ? 3 + ?	-	£18 13s 4d H	-
Holy Trinity Walton	Slight high point + side of hill but overall a flat site	-	-	-	6	1 2	YES on value	-	-
KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.									

8.3.13 *Stogursey parochia*

The last *parochia* to be discussed is Stogursey, and the most important church within it was at Stogursey which has an importance score of 16 and was the most important place within the *parochia* in 1086 (Gathercole 2003e; Table 8.14). Stogursey church was the mother-church to three chapels, albeit the evidence for two of them dates from the fourteenth century (Appendix 4). It is of note that an early medieval cemetery has been excavated during ground-works

for the new power station at Hinkley Point to the north of Stogursey church (Som. HER No. 32771). Whether there is a relationship between the most important post-Roman church or the parochial minster within a *parochia* and post-Roman or early medieval cemeteries is beyond the scope of this research. However, the close relationship at Stogursey is intriguing, as is that at Langford Budville. The distribution of the key churches in the *parochia* is shown in Figure 8.14.
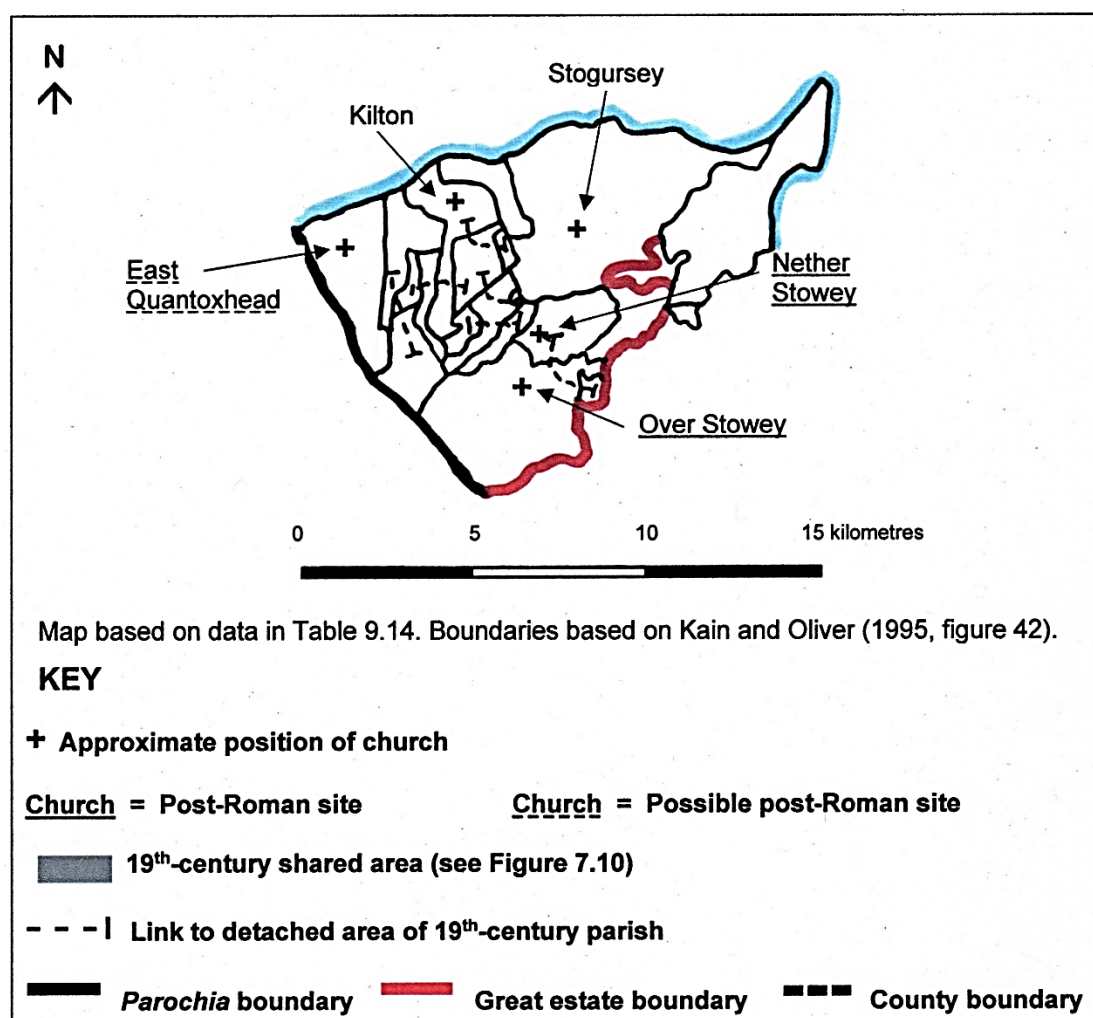
Figure 8.14. *Stogursey parochia.*

The site of Stogursey church is quite different from those of Kilton and Nether Stowey which are identified in the former case as a royal *villa*, and in the latter as a possible royal *villa* because one manor was held by Earl Harold in 1066 (*DB* 35,11). Stogursey church is in a small steep-sided valley through which runs a stream. The valley is quite flat by the stream where it borders part of the churchyard. The medieval town developed up one side of the valley while

the churchyard extends up the other with a partially curvilinear boundary. Overall these features are indicative of an early religious site, as discussed in Chapter 7 in relation to Braunton church in Devon. Indeed, Michael Costen (2011, 60) raises the possibility that Stogursey church is on a pre-Conquest site and adds that 'priories were founded at many sites which were collegiate churches prior to the Conquest', which may be true of Stogursey. There is no Domesday Survey evidence for a church at Stogursey and in 1066 Stogursey was held by a lay landholder, but by 1086 it was held by the king (*DB* 27,1). This is another example of King William taking over an important church which had lost significance pre-Conquest. In the mid-twelfth century a Benedictine priory was established at Stogursey (Bath *Acta* 1061-1205, No. 37) and the church was taken over by the priory.

There is no evidence that Stogursey was a royal *villa*, but its topography is possibly indicative of this, as it is sited within an area of low-lying land and is in some respects, comparable to the site of Kingsbury above Milborne Port (see Figure 5.2). In addition, in 1066/86 Stogursey was taxed on only 4 ½ hides while there was land for 14 ploughs, its value in 1066 was £25 and in 1086 it had a population of 52 (*DB* 27,1).

It is not possible to be certain about how the Church evolved within the *parochia*, but two churches were on post-Roman sites; the now demolished church of St Michael at Nether Stowey and St Peter's at Over Stowey. It is also possible that an earlier church at Stogursey was on Farringdon Hill (Som. HER No. 3407). In addition, there was a possible post-Roman religious site at East Quantoxhead. Kilton is identified as a royal *villa* as it was named in King Alfred's will (charter S1507) but whether Nether Stowey and Stogursey were is debateable. Stogursey church is identified as the initial minster within the *parochia* as it is sited on the side of a hill, the possible earlier church would have been on a high point above the existing church. Stogursey church had a high *Taxatio* value of £30 and it was held in 1086 by the king. It is also identified as the parochial minster as it is the only church within the *parochia* that meets more than two of the *parochia* minster criteria.

This is yet another *parochia* where it is difficult to determine exactly how the Church evolved. It is only possible to reach a tentative view by comparing and contrasting the various pieces of evidence with those from other *parochiae*. It is clear that Stogursey is the only church which meets more than one of the minster criteria. Furthermore, it is Stogursey which thrived in the medieval period with a Lay Subsidy Return of £20-08, although by *c.*1600 it had lost significance (Everitt 1967).

Table 8.14.   Stogursey parochia.

Church	Topogr-aphical code	Post-Roman site	Initial minster	PM or MRV or RV	Church import-ance rating	3 minster + 8 PM criteria	Most import-ant place 1086	*Taxatio* value	Lay Subsidy Return / MT
St Mary East Quantoxhead	High point	?YES	-	-	1	-	-	£10 13s 4d	-
St Nicholas Kilton	Slight promon-tory above area of low-lying land	-	-	RV	1	1 2	-	£6 13s 4d	-
St Mary Nether Stowey	Flat	-	-	?RV	6	1 1 + ?	-	£6 13s 4d	£6-67
St Michael Nether Stowey	Bottom of large hill	YES	-	-	No church now	-	-	-	-
St Peter Over Stowey	Promont-ory	YES	-	-	5	1 1	-	£8 13s 4d	-
St Andrew Stogursey	Side of hill above area of low-lying land	?YES but on different site	YES	PM ?MRV based on topo-graphy	16H	2 6	YES	£30 0s 0d H	£20-08 H
KEY: Ch – church; *DB* – Domesday Book; H – highest; jt H – Joint highest score; IM – initial minster; KAW – King Alfred's will; La – land; M-C – mother-church; Mon. – monastery; MT – market town; MRV – minster in royal *villa*; NK – not known; PM – parochial minster; Pr – priest; P-R – post-Roman; Rect. – rectilinear; RG – royal grant; RV – royal *villa*.									

8.3.14 *Summary*

The evidence from these twelve case studies demonstrates that the organisation of the Church developed via different trajectories depending on which *parochia* you look at, and furthermore that similar variations can be identified across the county. There are similarities between Bedminster in the north-north-east and Crewkerne in the south, and between Frome in the north-east and Winsford in the far west of the county. It is also clear that if most of the land in a *parochia*, and therefore its churches, was held by Glastonbury Abbey changes could be made to the status of the churches it held, for example the apparent decision to downgrade Butleigh in favour of Street / Walton. Similarly, that the importance of a church held by Glastonbury could mean that a royal *villa* did not gain a minster; for example Burnham. In several *parochiae* it is apparent that there was no fixed central religious focal point, and it is possible to identify and consider the process of transition of pre-eminence from one church to another, and from one settlement to another.

8.4 CONCLUSION

There is now stronger evidence to support the argument made by Susan Pearce in 1978 (97-108; see also Blair 1992, 265) that the post-Roman [British] churches in Somerset were assimilated by Wessex during the mid-seventh to eighth centuries as they took control of the South-West. This is demonstrated by the case studies discussed above which show that the starting point for the development of the early medieval Church in Somerset was the network of churches established on, or near post-Roman sites. Indeed, in some *parochia* it was one of these churches that later became the parochial minster; for example Milverton or South Brent. In looking at the pattern of churches identified as being on post-Roman sites (Figures 8.2 to 8.14) it can be seen how, in many cases, these churches form a partial ring around each *parochia*. Of course, as shown in Chapter 6, the boundaries of the *parochiae* were determined topographically, frequently by hills and ridges of high ground and many of the post-Roman religious sites were established on hills looking down on river valleys. It is therefore inevitable that in many cases they would be sited close to the parochial boundaries.

Having explored the historical evidence in depth, it is clear that the three sets of criteria:

- those to establish the importance rating of a church;
- those to identify minsters, based on the three criteria adopted by Hall (2000); and
- the eight criteria used to identify the parochial minsters,

have enabled the identification of initial and parochial minsters in Somerset. However, the key question to be addressed after considering these case studies is whether any additional criteria could be used to assist in the identification of minsters. This is particularly key if the approach adopted for this research is to be used to identify minsters in other regions. There are several possible criteria that have been evaluated during this research which, in relation to Somerset, cannot be utilised. They include that:

- as some parochial minsters were prebendal and/or appropriated because they had been downgraded, it cannot be assumed that a parochial minster had a high *Taxatio* value, and indeed for some no *Taxatio* valuation is available;

- there is only a tendency for churches which were either important, because they were on post-Roman sites or because they were established by the Church as initial minsters, to later be included in a prebend; and

- it cannot be assumed that the settlement around parochial minsters developed commercially post-Conquest, or indeed, that settlements continued to grow to the extent that they were market towns by *c.*1600 (Everitt 1967). Indeed, some parochial minsters could lose status to such an extent that they, and the settlement around them, were no longer an important focal point within the landscape by the end of the eleventh century.

There were other criteria that could be used, but only to provide collaborative evidence, as in Somerset they do not apply to all minsters.

- Evidence of a church in the Domesday Survey is important, but not all parochial minsters are named in the survey, however, some churches are named that have been identified as initial minsters.

- The distances between an initial minster and its associated royal *villa* were sometimes more than the 2-3 miles identified elsewhere by Blair (1992, 231). The distances between them were measured by the most direct route using footpaths and/or roads on the current Digimap OS map using the Digimap measuring tool (EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service accessed via http://edina.ac.uk/digimap). The distance between Wedmore and Cheddar church, for example, is about 4 miles, and between Dulverton and Winsford church about 5 miles. However, the distance between many royal *villae* and their neighbouring initial minster was between 2-3 miles; for example between Burnham and South Brent, Milverton and Wiveliscombe and between Bedminster and Long Ashton.

Chapter 7 considered whether in Somerset, as suggested in Dorset (Hall 2000, 83; see also 2003, 54), the post-Roman [British] church was suppressed in parallel with the establishment of early medieval minsters within planned rectilinear enclosures. This can be seen in the relationship between Crewkerne church, a parochial minster within a rectilinear enclosure, and Easthams, the post-Roman church that preceded it. However, as shown by the case studies discussed above this was not the norm in Somerset. Indeed, Costen (2011, 165) makes the point in relation to the planned rectilinear enclosure around the parochial minster of Milborne Port, that it may have been established quite late in the early medieval period. The implication that can be drawn from this is that many churches on post-Roman sites retained their pre-eminent role as an important religious focal point into the later early medieval period and indeed beyond in some cases. These churches were not suppressed when Wessex, or indeed when Mercia for a time, took control of Somerset (*ASC* record for the year 733 AD). That churches on post-Roman sites continued to provide important religious focal points across Somerset is clearly shown by the case studies; for example Old Cleeve and Winsford churches, and the early church at Shapwick. In addition, in many *parochiae* the settlements around these churches, regardless of whether they were parochial minsters, retained their

importance as shown by them having high 1334 Lay Subsidy Returns; for example for Cucklington, Old Cleeve and Rode (Letters 2010).

There is only one additional criterion that should be adopted when assessing which churches were important pre-Conquest in order to identify those which by 1066 were no longer pre-eminent. It is quite clear that it was crucial to King William to ensure that churches which had been important but which had been downgraded by being granted away from royal ownership, should once again be in royal control. The reasons for this are discussed in Section 4.2.5.

In conclusion, across much of Somerset the organisation of the post-Roman Church, and the churches on which it was based, retained, and indeed maintained, its importance into the medieval period. Clearly, the organisation of the Church changed over time, particularly as each early large *parochia* fragmented into parishes and individual churches increased or decreased in importance. Critically, it is important to note that many of Somerset's parish churches in the twenty-first century are still sited on post-Roman religious sites such as at Clapton in Gordano (Figures 8.15a and 8.15b).

Figure 8.15a.   *St Michael's church, Clapton in Gordano identified as being on a post-Roman site (author's photo).*

Figure 8.15b.   *The view from St Michael's church, Clapton in Gordano overlooking the Bristol Channel (author's photo).*

The case studies demonstrate that the trajectory of Church development in Somerset varied from *parochia* to *parochia*. In being able to identify the parochial minsters and their subsequent history it is possible to show that many of them did not remain as important religious focal points. It is now possible to understand why earlier researchers encountered so many difficulties in identifying Somerset's minsters because many such minsters did not become important medieval churches, and relatively few became medieval mother-churches.

Using the county of Somerset as a case study to understand how the early medieval Church developed is the key objective of this thesis. It is therefore important to use a systematic approach which could be utilised for research in other counties. How this might work is explored in Chapter 7 by discussing several churches from Cornwall, Devon and Dorset. A summary of how research into the structure of the early medieval Church in other counties might be undertaken is detailed in Chapter 9.

Chapter 9

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9.1   INTRODUCTION

This thesis uses Somerset as a case study in order to construct a systematic, multi-disciplinary assessment framework to identify the origins and roles of early medieval churches. It was important to ensure that the methodology used could be replicated across the South-West and in other regions. The preliminary indications are that the same framework could be used to understand the development of the Church in other South-Western counties, albeit that such a study must take account of local peculiarities, such as topographical characteristics.

The overall aim of the research has been to understand how the early medieval Church evolved in Somerset, as previously there was no consensus as to which churches should be classified as early medieval minsters as shown in Table 3.1. This lack of consensus has prevented the history of Somerset's early medieval Church being fully understood. Initial research (Lomas 2009) to identify Somerset's pre-Conquest urban settlements, which have been linked to minsters, showed that there was a complicated and changing relationship between early medieval churches and important settlements which warranted further investigation.

The main research objective has been to construct a chronology of Church development and thereby recognise which Somerset churches were early medieval minsters. There are two strands to this objective: to identify the minsters and their original *parochiae*, and thus the trajectories by which the Church evolved from the late post-Roman period. In addition, a subsidiary objective has been to construct a classification system which might reflect both the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the changing status of churches across the early Middle Ages. The questions addressed by this thesis were:

- to what extent can the physical characteristics of where a church is sited in the landscape be related to the time and the context within which a site was adopted as a religious focal point;

- was Somerset's early medieval Church founded on the pre-existing network of post-Roman churches;

- what was the nature of the relationship between the siting of royal v*illae* and that of nearby churches;

- whether the large early *parochiae* associated with parochial minsters can be identified throughout Somerset; and

- to what extent did Somerset's minsters develop into proto-urban settlements between the ninth and eleventh centuries and later into medieval towns?

These key questions have been addressed in this thesis in order to test and reflect on the prevailing theories and debates about how the early medieval Church evolved.

It has been possible to address all the above research questions and to reach definitive conclusions in relation to them, so that the overall trajectory of Church development in Somerset has been identified thereby enabling the relationships between churches from the sixth to eleventh centuries to be understood. The most important aspect of this trajectory is the transition from late post-Roman church sites to churches identified as initial minsters, and then the further transition to the establishment of parochial minsters. However, as discussed using the twelve case studies in Chapter 8 (Section 8.3), the trajectory can only be described as multi-stranded because it varied between *parochiae* due to it sometimes being interrupted or incomplete. It is possible that not all the post-Roman church sites have been identified as some sites may no longer be in use making them more difficult to recognise.

In considering how the Church was organised it became obvious that there were changes in the affiliations between churches, also between mother-churches and their chapels, and above all that the importance of some churches had changed over time. An important pre-Conquest church did not necessarily become an important post-Conquest mother-church. Crucially, in collating the data used in this research, no assumptions were made based on

the work of others or on the criteria they had adopted, as to which churches were likely to have been early medieval minsters. Initially information was collated on all the Somerset churches and chapels identified as existing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As the research progressed using earlier sources any additional churches and chapels which were identified were also included within the data set. This approach is quite different from the standard methodology used to understand the early medieval Church (see Section 1.4) which has been to start with the churches most likely to be important. No decisions as to which churches were parochial minsters were made until the dataset was complete for all the identified churches and chapels and the boundaries of the early large *parochiae* had been mapped.

The relationship between the settlement closest to, or surrounding, a parochial minster has also been evaluated to understand if it lost or gained importance and therefore to ascertain which settlement in each *parochia* was pre-eminent in 1066, 1086, in the early fourteenth century, and in the sixteenth century (Table 9.1). In Somerset there were settlements around, or adjacent to minsters, which had not developed urban characteristics by 1086. For example, the Domesday Survey provides no evidence of Carhampton and Cannington (*DB* 1,6), both identified as sites of parochial minsters, having burgesses and / or markets, which would be key indicators of early medieval urbanisation. Indeed, neither place became an urban settlement during the later medieval period. Some minster settlements, however, already possessed urban characteristics by 1086 and later developed into medieval towns; for example Taunton (*DB* 2,1). While other places which had urban characteristics in 1086 have not been identified as minster settlements for example Axbridge (*DB* 1,2) with its 32 burgesses. Therefore, in Somerset there is only a partial correlation between minster settlements and urbanisation as can be seen in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1.   *Parochial minster settlements and their urban characteristics*

No. of parochial minsters	Settlement most important in 1086	Settlement with highest Lay Subsidy Return in 1334	Settlement was a market town in 16th century according to Everett (1967)
41	35 (85.4%)	19 (46.3%)	16 (39%)

There are two questions which this thesis has not been able to address; firstly whether a relationship can be discerned between the early *parochiae* and post-Roman or early medieval cemeteries. The main reason for not pursuing this issue is that for some parts of Somerset no early cemeteries have been identified and therefore no conclusive county-wide view could be reached as to whether such a relationship existed throughout Somerset. For example, until 2015 the fifth- to seventh-century cemetery at Hinkley Point, near to Stogursey was unknown (Reynish 2017; Som. HER No. 32771), and it was not until 2019 that a *c*.late third- to early fifth-century cemetery at Somerton was excavated (Current Archaeology 360, 11). It is of note that both Somerton and Stogursey have been identified as parochial minsters. It is to be hoped that other early cemeteries will be discovered in Somerset so that consideration can be given as to whether there was a geographically defined sacred space central to each *parochia*, within which a post-Roman temple and/or church and cemetery can be found close to a pre-eminent early medieval church. What this research has demonstrated is the importance of identifying these long-standing sacred places (Moser and Feldman 2014b, 1-11).

The second unanswered question is how the early medieval Church provided pastoral care in Somerset (for a discussion on the wider scholarship see Section 1.2.3). Due to the paucity of specific evidence in Somerset no attempt has been made to consider how the early medieval minsters were staffed or to consider how they provided pastoral care within their *parochiae* because there is no explicit evidence of the relationship between them and their chapelries. By identifying where the individual parochial minsters were sited in Somerset and establishing how the Church was organised, this thesis makes a substantive contribution to 'mapping the parochial geography of all England' as requested by John Blair (2005, 153).

It was only after reconstructing Somerset's early great estates that their *parochiae* could be identified, and only then was it possible to discern the important churches within them. It was this tripartite approach which enabled the parochial minsters to be identified. The most important finding was the identification of three categories of church site which relate both to when the site was first adopted as a religious focal point within the landscape, and to the

status of individual foundations. Some churches can be classified as being on or close to post-Roman religious sites which are on high points in the landscape overlooking a valley or in the case of Minehead church the sea (Figures 9.1 and 9.2); some of these were adopted as initial minsters and parochial minsters. Blair (1992, 231) has considered the topographical settings of minsters and concluded, as had Rosemary Cramp in 1983, that initial [early] minsters were generally sited 2-3 miles from a royal *villa*. This research has confirmed this view. In many of Somerset's *parochiae* the distance between the initial minsters and their associated royal v*illae* is indeed 2-3 miles, although in some cases it is greater. These initial minsters are either on sloping sites, for example Combe St Nicholas (Figures 9.3a and 9.3b) or on low-lying sites, for example Kingsbury Episcopi (Figures 9.4a and 9.4b) and are usually sited within the village or settlement which they currently serve. The third category of churches are minsters established within or adjacent to royal *villae* which are found in different topographical settings dependent on when the site was adopted. Bruton church (Figure 9.5) is in a valley close to a stream and opposite the main settlement which is on a steeply sloping hillside while Milborne Port church is on a sloping site within a planned settlement (Figure 9.6). To identify these categories a multi-disciplinary approach was used, but the key evidence was provided by the topographical setting of each church. Using a landscape archaeological approach to identify the key characteristics of church sites has been adopted by other researchers, but not as part of a comprehensive assessment process to identify categories of churches across a county as has been done in this thesis.

As the pattern of Church development within each *parochia* was increasingly understood it became clear that there were different trajectories of development. There was no clear correlation between the different trajectories and where the *parochiae* were sited within the county. It is therefore probable that these different trajectories relate to pragmatic political or ecclesiastical decisions.

Figure 9.1. *St Michael's church, Minehead looking west along St Michael's Road. It is on a local high point above Higher Town at 65.9 metres above sea level with a sea view; it has been identified as being on a post-Roman site (author's photo).*

Figure 9.2. *St Mary's church, Kingsbrompton [Brompton Regis] looking west from New Inn Farm; identified as on a post-Roman site. It is on a local high point at 252.7 metres above sea level and looks out over the valley of the river Haddeo (author's photo).*

Looking south-west from main entrance.

Main entrance into churchyard, looking north-west up Vicarage Hill

Figures 9.3a and 9.3b.   *St Nicholas' church, Combe St Nicholas, identified as being an initial minster. It is sited on a slope in the middle of the settlement at 160.9 metres above sea level (author's photos).*

Looking north-east
from main entrance

Looking west
down Church
Street

Figures 9.4a and 9.4b.   *St Martin's church, Kingsbury Episcopi, identified as being an initial minster. It is sited within the village on low-lying land at 12.2 metres above sea level by the river Parrett (author's photos).*

Figure 9.5.   St Peter and St Paul's church, Bruton looking south from Station Road, identified as being a parochial minster. It is sited in a valley opposite the main settlement and next to the river Brue at 61.3 metres above sea level (author's photo).

Figure 9.6.   St John the Evangelist church, Milborne Port looking east near Bathwell Lane entrance, identified as being a parochial minster on a sloping site within a planned settlement. It is 81.8 metres above sea level (author's photo).

To fully explore the implications of these findings several case studies are discussed in Chapter 7 (Section 7.2). These are mainly of churches in Somerset but nine are from elsewhere in the South-West so that the basic assessment process could be tested to ensure it was robust and could be used to identify early medieval churches in other regions.

Further case studies in Chapter 8 (Section 8.3) explore the criteria by which parochial, and initial minsters, can be identified. The chapter also looks in detail at how the Church evolved within each case study *parochia* and explores the trajectory by which this happened and why in some cases the obvious trajectory was interrupted, altered or not completed. Given that one of the objectives of this research has been to use Somerset as a case study to understand how the early medieval Church developed, it was important to construct an inclusive, replicable and systematic process based on empirical evidence. Chapter 8 therefore concludes by establishing the criteria that may be adopted elsewhere to identify early medieval minsters.

As discussed previously in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.2), it is widely believed that the organisation of the late post-Roman Church in Somerset was left largely intact when Wessex took control of the county in the mid-seventh century (Costen 2011, 25-9). That this impressionistic view is correct has been confirmed by this more systematic study. It has been possible to identify that many churches are on or near post-Roman religious sites and crucially that many developed into important early medieval parochial minsters; for example Chewton Mendip. However, in some cases churches on post-Roman sites lost importance and their role and status during the early medieval period was transient. Despite this, most remain parish churches into the twenty-first century. Using a multi-disciplinary approach, which included topographical and morphological evidence, it was thus possible to identify how the early medieval Church was geographically structured across the county thereby dividing it into a series of large early *parochiae*. In addition, within each *parochia* a parochial minster, or in a few cases an early and a subsequent parochial minster, have been identified. The case studies discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 explore the likely origins of them and whether the early minsters originated on post-Roman sites or were established on new sites. The implications of this are discussed

below but it is important to note that this thesis clearly shows that Somerset's parochial minsters cannot be solely identified by how they are sited within the landscape, either topographically or morphologically. Historical, architectural and archaeological evidence must also be used (see Figures 4.2 and 6.8).

An important finding from this research is that in Somerset the structure of the thirteenth-century Church was still based on the geographical framework derived from the early great estates and the early *parochiae* (see Section 6.2). This was an unexpected finding because the possibility of a correlation between the early medieval and thirteenth century ecclesiastical structure in Somerset had never been raised by other researchers, including Michael Costen despite his in-depth research into the history of Somerset. There is a clear correlation between the boundaries of the *parochiae*, established using topographical evidence, and that of the medieval archdeaconries and their constituent deaneries as shown in Figures 6.13 and 6.14.

No overall correlation has been found between the tenth-century hundredal boundaries and the early *parochiae*. This research has shown that in Somerset the early parochial boundaries were defined by topographical features such as ridges of high land, rivers and areas of low-lying wetlands. Therefore if, as around Exeter, they were used occasionally as the basis for the later hundredal boundaries, it is to be expected that sometimes they followed topographical divisions in the landscape. This conclusion equates to that of Theresa Hall in Dorset (2000, 45, 82) who is quite certain that 'the hundreds do not provide a key to the form of lost minster *parochiae*'. The evidence indicates, as discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.2), that the boundaries of the hundreds were grafted on to the earlier ecclesiastical structure and that consequently, in some places, the same boundary is used for an early estate or a *parochia* as for an eleventh-century hundred. There is only limited evidence that the earlier ecclesiastical boundaries influenced the hundredal boundaries in Somerset. Therefore, the boundaries of the hundreds were not utilised to identify Somerset's early medieval *parochiae*.

9.2   UNDERSTANDING HOW THE EARLY CHURCH EVOLVED

There is widespread agreement that post-Roman churches continued to function into the early medieval period. The multi-disciplinary, inclusive and structured approach developed for this thesis was essential in establishing how Somerset's post-Roman churches could be identified and in discerning how the Church evolved across the county. This approach is illustrated by the case studies discussed in Chapters 7 and 8; for example Honiton in Devon and South Brent in Somerset (Section 7.3.5).

Before this research was undertaken there had been no systematic review of possible post-Roman churches within a specified area in the South-West, and therefore there was no consensus as to how these churches might be identified. This thesis enabled a systematic assessment process to be constructed using historical and topographical evidence and this facilitated the identification of Somerset's post-Roman churches. This approach was essential due to the inherent difficulties in using only historical evidence which has been summed up very well by Simon Draper (2006, 82-4) in relation to identifying Wiltshire's early medieval minsters. He discusses several churches in relation to the available information and his overall conclusion is that it is essential to utilise the full range of evidence that can be identified for each church (Draper 2006, 82).

Previous historical and landscape archaeological research into the development of the early medieval Church in some English counties or regions, Ireland and Wales explored several of the questions which have been addressed, but in most cases the methodology has been quite different from that used in this thesis. Research into the origins of the early medieval parishes in Gaelic Ireland by Sinéad Ní Ghabhláin (1996) was based on written historical sources and OS survey maps, the latter providing evidence of detached portions of parishes which frequently reflect seasonal transhumance. The OS maps, together with the 1302-1306 ecclesiastical taxation records, were used to delineate the topographical boundaries of the early large *parochiae* [primary parishes] and the strong indications are that these pre-date the medieval parishes (Ní Ghabhláin 1996, 48-9). Ní Ghabhláin (1996) therefore utilised topographical evidence to reconstruct the parish structure of Kilfenora, whereas

Paul MacCotter (2019) only used historical evidence to research the origins of Irish parishes in order to understand how the system of pastoral care based on 'primary churches' developed in Ireland from the seventh century; these churches have been identified as the later *túath*-churches. Both these approaches are valid, although in Somerset prior to this research there was no consensus as to which churches could be described as 'primary churches'. By combining historical and topographical evidence, as this thesis does, a more robust understanding of Church development has been possible.

Research elsewhere has enabled the boundaries of the early great estates, early *parochiae* and later parishes to be identified but *parochiae* and parish boundaries have in the main been researched by collating and interpreting historical evidence. For example, Steven Bassett (1991) in reconstructing the early parish boundaries around Shrewsbury uses a range of written evidence from the seventh- to ninth-century Tribal Hidage, to the Domesday Survey, to the nineteenth-century parish boundaries, including the detached portions of parishes. However, it is of note that he also utilises topographical features, which Bassett (1991, 3) describes as an 'independent and fruitful source' of evidence, to determine the likely early parish boundaries. Similarly, both Eric Klingelhöfer (1992, 87-9, 126) in Hampshire and Theresa Hall (2000, 7, 40) in Dorset concluded that the key evidence to identify the boundaries of both the early great estates and the early *parochiae* was derived from the landscape. The boundaries equating to topographical divisions in the landscape defined by ridges of high ground, low-lying wetlands and river basins, these topographically defined boundaries have also been found in Somerset.

Della Hooke (1998, 62-102, specifically 74-81) discusses at length the origins and formations of territorial boundaries drawing on examples from across southern England from Cornwall to Kent and concludes that the boundaries of early medieval administrative units were 'obviously' derived from topographical features in the landscape such as areas of wetland and ridges of high ground. It is clear from the research done elsewhere that before the boundaries of the early *parochiae* in Somerset could be determined it was essential to identify the early topographical divisions in the landscape represented by the early great estate boundaries. Therefore, instead of using

historical evidence to establish Somerset's early boundaries it was decided to use topographical evidence. Initially, it enabled clarification of the early great estate boundaries which had been identified by other researchers; for example by Steven Rippon (2006; 2012). Then, having identified the overall geographical framework, based on the early great estates, within which the Church was established it was possible to use topographical evidence to identify the boundaries of their constituent early *parochiae*. Therefore the approach adopted for this research has been to begin with the topographical divisions in the landscape, rather than using historical evidence to establish the boundaries of the *parochiae*.

Several researchers have considered how churches are sited within the landscape and in the South-West Theresa Hall (2003; 2009), Michael Calder (2004, 3-24), Nick Corcos (2001; 2002), and Sam Turner (2006a, 37-48) have all identified the importance of physical evidence in understanding when a church site was first adopted as a religious focal point. For example, Calder (2004) describes the topographical setting of three early Somerset ecclesiastical sites, Kewstock, Street and St Decumans in relation to the lie of the land and sources of water but draws no overall conclusions in relation to the topography of the three sites.

Turner (2006a, 48), reflecting on the various factors that might have influenced where churches are sited, reached the view that how churches sit within the landscape needs to be evaluated alongside relationships between churches, and between churches, settlements and the administrative framework. It is this approach that has been adopted here in order to understand how the early medieval Church was structured across Somerset. Initially, the long-established approach of using architectural, archaeological and historical evidence was used but this proved inadequate in identifying when church sites were originally chosen as religious focal points. This only became possible when a topographical and morphological assessment of all the churches identified as being potentially important was completed. This thesis demonstrates that to understand how the Church was structured it is essential to use topographical evidence; initially to establish the geographical structure of

the Church and then to identify when it is likely that each church site was chosen to provide a religious focal point within the landscape.

This thesis has therefore, in effect, considered the hypothesis which Philip Masters proposed in relation to West Sussex; that

> an early territorial structure was provided by these *regiones*, a pattern of estates appears to have fitted within them, based around … royal and ecclesiastical centres … the form and development of these estates is integral to a discussion of the Church in the Anglo-Saxon [early medieval] period (Masters 2001,49).

Ní Ghabhláin came to this conclusion in relation to Gaelic Ireland namely that there are indications

> that the medieval parishes were carved out of larger territorial units. Each of these territories has a 'primary church', larger and with a higher valuation than the other parish churches … that the primary parishes represent secular territories or *túatha* which were later subdivided into parishes (Ní Ghabhláin 1996, 49).

There are clearly similarities between the statements by Masters and Ní Ghabhláin, and also with one of the key findings of this thesis. Each author's choice of terminology may be different from that used by the other, and from that used in this thesis, but there is no doubt that a similar pattern of development is being described. It is significant that the same pattern has been proposed for West Sussex and Gaelic Ireland and by this thesis in Somerset as they constitute three quite different areas of the British Isles.

Michael Shapland (2015, 495) is quite clear that early medieval [Anglo-Saxon] kings deliberately used Christianity as a means of exerting their authority to establish a strong power base (see also Blair 1988 38-9; 2005, 49-51). In Wiltshire, Draper (2006, 84) has identified that, in addition to the original or 'old' minster churches sited within royal estates, secondary or pseudo-minsters were established towards the end of the early medieval [Late Saxon] period on monastic and episcopal estates. Turner (2006a, 177-8) noted that post-Roman religious sites and royal *villae* could be sited together from *c*.300-600 AD, as at Tintagel, Cornwall but from 600-900 AD the evidence indicates that churches were not linked directly to royal *villae.* However, this situation changed after 900 AD with the 'establishment of new royal centres at or close to important church sites' (Turner 2006a, 177-8). This statement, based on his

research into Cornish church sites, echoes the outcomes from this research which has enabled the latter two stages to be identified in Somerset, namely, initial minsters sited away from the royal v*illae*, and parochial minsters adjacent to, or within, royal v*illae*.

9.3   OUTLINE OF A DEFINITIVE HYPOTHESIS

This thesis demonstrates that the development of the early medieval Church in Somerset occurred within the framework of topographically defined early great estates. It was as constituent members of these that the early *parochiae* were established. It was also within this framework that the later medieval deaneries and archdeaconries were established, even though the initial boundaries were disrupted by the granting of land to the monasteries at Glastonbury and Muchelney (see Section 6.2.23).

Many of the churches established in the post-Roman period remained as important fixed religious focal points to the extent that they developed into early medieval parochial minsters; for example South Petherton. After reviewing all the then current evidence Costen (2011, 185) reached the view that the organisation of the post-Roman Church in Somerset should be described as forming a 'loose structure' (see Section 1.3.1). This research has shown that even before Wessex took control of the Church in the mid-seventh century it was centrally administered within a stable geographic structure which encompassed an established pattern of churches across the county. A better description of the post-Roman Church in Somerset is that it was well organised and based upon a pattern of long-standing sacred places within the landscape.

As Wessex took political control of Somerset one or more initial minsters were established within easy reach, usually 2-3 miles (*c*.3-5 kms), of newly established royal *villae* (Blair 1992, 231). Frequently this research has identified a pair of initial minsters either side of a royal *villa*, but whether they had the same level of status concurrently it is impossible to distinguish. Often an existing church on, or close to a post-Roman site was chosen as an initial minster, but on occasion a new one was built; for example at Stogursey (see Section 8.3.13). The evidence does not indicate that Wessex adopted a

standard approach to reorganising the structure of the Church. Indeed, this is to be expected because a large number of manorial estates were held by the king and members of his family, while others were held by powerful churchmen such as the Abbot of Glastonbury Abbey, and no doubt some were held by powerful lords, all of whom controlled the churches within their estates. This thesis shows that there were 'plenty of local churches' by 750 AD as proposed by Costen (2011, 185) but it also shows that most were not then 'lost to us' but became medieval parish churches. Presumably for pragmatic political reasons, royal *villae* were frequently discarded and new sites chosen; for example, there is no evidence as to why Cheddar was discarded instead of Wedmore (see Section 8.3.10). This in turn meant that sometimes an initial minster was downgraded and a new one chosen or built.

In many *parochiae* the next stage in the development of the Church was the establishment of parochial minsters within or adjacent to royal *villae*. However, in some *parochiae* this did not happen because the royal *villa* was abandoned and the initial minster, which was sometimes on or close to a post-Roman site was adopted as the parochial minster. This is what happened within the South Brent *parochia* as discussed in Chapter 8 (Section 8.3.7). The overall finding of this thesis is that the development of the Church in Somerset, between the sixth and the eleventh centuries, cannot be easily summarised because the trajectory of development within *parochiae* was sometimes interrupted or changed and therefore varied between them. In some *parochiae*, the parochial minster was on a post-Roman site, the most important example being Bath, but this was only true of ten minsters and possibly true of another six. Nine parochial minsters, and possibly an additional five, originated as initial minsters sited some distance from a royal *villa*. Lastly, sixteen parochial minsters were established within a royal *villa* or within a possible royal *villa*, none of which had originated as post-Roman sites or as initial minsters. Therefore, the development of the Church within each *parochia* needs to be assessed on the specific evidence relating to it; it is not possible to make assumptions about a specific *parochia* based on generalised evidence, nor on trajectories pertaining to other *parochiae*.

This thesis also considers the long-term stability of royal *villae* using the 1334 Lay Subsidy Returns and whether any of them developed to the extent

that they were classified as sixteenth-century market towns by Alan Everitt (1967). It is quite clear that frequently a settlement which began life as a royal *villa*, within which a parochial minster was established, did not remain as a fixed central point within the landscape and therefore had no long-term stability. Indeed, in some cases a royal *villa* and its parochial minster no longer equated to a fixed central place by the end of the eleventh century, as in the case of Carhampton. In other instances the royal *villa* around or adjacent to a church on a post-Roman site developed into a successful medieval market town; for example South Petherton. In Somerset there were a number of trajectories by which settlements evolved to the extent that, in some cases, a site which had never been a royal *villa* and had no significance in the eleventh century became a medieval market town; for example Bridgwater which by 1334 had the highest Lay Subsidy Return of any town in Somerset (Scrase 2005, 58; Letters 2010). This level of instability, of both parochial minsters and previously pre-eminent places, is found across Somerset though not everywhere. It is nevertheless a significant finding. It is no doubt why identifying the early medieval minsters in Somerset has in the past proved to be so difficult.

9.4   NEW APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING HOW THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CHURCH DEVELOPED

It was only possible to develop the research methodology used in this thesis because cognisance was taken of Jeremy Haslam's (1984b, xvii) statement in his introduction to the 'Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England' that inherent in using systematic topographic analysis is the requirement to look for repeating and contrasting patterns and that for this to be achievable it needs to be done over a large discrete geographical area. In collating topographical evidence in this manner and combining it with other sources of data, such as from historical documents and archaeological excavations it is possible to construct a robust multi-disciplinary synthesis. To establish a methodology that can achieve this has been the underlying objective of this thesis. Furthermore, by researching churches in other South-Western counties it demonstrates that this approach could be used to investigate and indeed supplement research already completed into how the Church evolved elsewhere.

Overall the research methodology is based on three fundamental principles which can be applied to all research into the early Church. First, that the geographical framework within which the Church was established and developed needs to be closely defined. Secondly, it is vital to not make assumptions about the importance or role of individual churches based on earlier historical research. Thirdly, the importance of site visits to as many churches as practical is crucial to understanding how they are located within the landscape and critically facilitates interpretation of the topographical siting of churches as shown on OS maps.

This thesis demonstrates that it is essential to construct an extensive and multi-disciplinary retrogressive dataset for all the churches and chapels within the area being researched. The starting point for the dataset should be the First Edition OS maps and the 1840's Tithe Maps and then all accessible relevant historical evidence between the eighteenth and eleventh centuries, and indeed earlier if it is available. This should be supplemented by architectural, archaeological and topographical evidence. The next step is to develop a weighting system for the evidence to facilitate comparative assessments between churches and *parochiae*. Consideration should be given to how different sources of data can be combined to enable the validity of the evidence to be strengthened. The weighting system should be constructed so that it is possible to identify changes in the importance and significance of each church over time.

This approach has been crucial in meeting the objectives of this thesis which for example, demonstrates the longevity and overall stability of parish boundaries in Somerset from the eleventh or twelfth century. It has also facilitated understanding of the long-standing importance of sacred places in the landscape. Adopting this approach elsewhere would complement research already carried out into the early Church, as demonstrated by the case studies in Chapter 7 for example, Crantock, Cornwall (Section 7.3.5) and Braunton, Devon (Section 7.3.6). Only a small number of churches in these counties were considered using a limited amount of historical evidence but a full topographical assessment, including a site visit, was completed for each of them. The assessment of these churches strongly indicates that across the South-West

the early Church utilised post-Roman church sites. Further research using the approach developed in this thesis will facilitate a greater understanding of the extent to which the network of post-Roman churches formed the foundation of the early medieval Church. In addition, it will facilitate understanding of the relationships between royal *villae* and early medieval minsters and determine if there was a pattern of initial minsters across the South-West and in other regions, prior to parochial minsters being established in or adjacent to royal *villae*.

One key conclusion that must be drawn is that it is not possible to understand how the early medieval Church, nor indeed the post-Roman Church, was organised by using what are believed to be the most important churches as a starting point. As Susan Oosthuizen (2019, 19) has indicated it is crucial to follow Herbert Finberg's advice: 'to clear our mind of preconceptions, to work forwards from the beginning, and to examine the admittedly inadequate evidence as it comes' (Finberg 1972, 401). The starting point, which would be applicable in all counties, in considering how the early Church was organised should be the earliest territorial framework within which it existed. Only when that has been established should attention turn to the early religious sites and churches.