

**Medieval Religious Patronage:**  
**A Study of the Anglo-Welsh Marcher**  
**Lords and their Connections**  
**to Religious Houses,**  
**1066 - 1300.**

Submitted by Catherine Lucy Hollinghurst to the University of Exeter as a dissertation for the degree of Masters by Research in Archaeology, October 2012.

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## **Abstract**

In a world where religion played a far greater role in society than it does in the modern day, it is no surprise that those living in the medieval period desired a close association with the church. Nowhere is this association clearer than with the aristocracy of the time. This project looks in detail at the close relationship between Anglo-Norman castle lords and monastic institutions, considering the different ways in which they patronised religious houses and the spiritual and social gains that they could enjoy as a result of their support. By looking at the study area of the Anglo-Welsh Marches, an overview is built up of the connections between the monastery and the castle, before individual high status Anglo-Norman families and their associated religious institutions are considered to give a more complete and detailed picture. In addition to the social aspects of this association, the wider environments of monastic sites are also studied, raising notable similarities between religious and high status secular landscapes.

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### **Acknowledgements.**

I would like to thank several people who have assisted in the completion of this dissertation. First and foremost my thanks go to Professor Oliver Creighton for his help and guidance this year, and to Professor Stephen Rippon for his additional assistance. Next, to Owain Connors for his help with the finer points of ArcMap GIS, and finally to my family for their support, in particular Dilys and Tim for their photographs and company on site visits.

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction.**

The aim of this project is to examine the patterns of Anglo-Norman religious patronage in the Welsh Marches between 1066 and 1300, with emphasis on the social and landscape aspects involved in benefactions. This area of study is relevant because of the great importance of religion in medieval life, and the high number of religious institutions founded or supported by the wealthier figures of society. In academic terms, it is currently relevant because of the developments in castle landscape studies, which focus on the ways in which the medieval designed landscape could demonstrate the power, wealth and status of those responsible for their creation. It will be interesting to judge the extent to which these concepts applying to a secular lordly landscape could also apply to an ecclesiastical site such as a monastery.

The area of the Anglo-Welsh border was chosen as the focus of this study for several reasons. Throughout the Norman period, the border was highly contested and subject to numerous territorial disputes. This resulted in the Marcher lords enjoying a position of authority that differed from seigneurial power elsewhere in England; although managing their land on behalf of the king, the lordships of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford were managed as semi-autonomous earldoms (Rowley, 2001, 91), giving figures such as Roger de Montgomery and William fitzOsbern (Earls of Shrewsbury and Hereford respectively) additional influence that was vital to their success in controlling the area. The imposition of castles was a major way of stamping their authority on the population under their rule, but the role of the status displayed by their ability to support and create new religious buildings such as abbeys, priories and churches must not be forgotten. The major centres of the Marcher Earldoms contain some of the earliest Norman monastic foundations in the country, such as the Benedictine abbeys of Chester and Shrewsbury which were established early in the post-Conquest period.

In order to achieve the aims of this project, several objectives will be met. First, county-wide studies will be made for Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire, as these are the areas covered by the three Norman border earldoms of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford. This will involve the creation (using ArcGIS) and interpretation of maps for the three counties, studying aspects such as the distribution

and foundation dates of castles and monasteries, status of castle sites and orders of religious houses. Following this, the religious patronage of two influential families of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy will be studied in detail. This will include an overview of their benefactions and the archaeological and historical record of the sites that they were associated with in the border area. These case studies will then enable a discussion of the findings, which will draw comparisons both between the patronage of the different families and with the wider academic debate of high status displays within the medieval landscape.



## **Chapter 2 - Academic Background.**

This chapter aims to provide an academic background to this study by focussing on the previous research and publications that are relevant to this project. It takes the form of a literature survey and is split into sections (although there is a certain degree of overlap) discussing monastic study, castles, lordship in the Welsh Marches area (with particular attention paid to the unique laws and rights enjoyed by the lords of the March), and high status landscapes. A history of the research of these aspects is included along with the ideas and theories important to this study.

### **2.1 - Monastic Study.**

Monasteries have attracted interest for hundreds of years, even before their widespread destruction in the reign of Henry VIII. John Leland provides us with information on their wealth and value in the 1520s, and other commissions linked to this subject followed soon afterwards (Coppack, 2006, 13). As well as attracting antiquarian interest for their history, monastic sites were fashionable in the romantic period of the arts, demonstrated well by Tintern Abbey on the Welsh border. The artist J. M. W. Turner depicted this ruin in several pieces of work, and the poet William Wordsworth wrote the poem *Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey* while visiting the site (Robinson, 2002, 23).

From the later 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, investigations of monastic sites were primarily concerned with architectural issues, looking at the surviving evidence of buildings (Coppack, 2006, 23). For example, works such as Evans' 1938 publication *The Romanesque Architecture of the Order of Cluny* discuss the distinctive building styles of this religious group in detail. This concentration on surviving architecture, and gaining an understanding of ground plans using detailed surveys of sites linked with documentary research (published as detailed reports in journals and county periodicals), formed the basis of the pioneering studies of monastic history (Keevil, 2001, 1). Sir William St John Hope was a major figure in this type of study; he surveyed and excavated numerous sites of various monastic orders (examples of his work include titles such as *The architectural history of the cathedral church and monastery of St. Andrew at Rochester*) during his working life and started using

‘standard plans’ after working with architects during the later stages of his career (Coppack, 2006, 24-5).

It was only with the rising awareness of medieval archaeology in the 1950s that the focus became less about plans and more about the context within which monasteries operated. The rise of processual archaeology in the 1960s saw the study broadening to incorporate elements of the monastic landscape (Pestell, 2004, 8-9), with studies such as Donkin’s series of papers regarding the agricultural and assarting activities of the Cistercians (1958; 1962-3; 1964) helping to broaden the previously narrow focus on architectural plans to one that included elements of the wider context of a religious site. Gilchrist and Mytum’s 1989 publication *The Archaeology of Rural Monasteries* really helped to alter the emphasis of research to the wider landscape of monasteries (Keevil, 2001, 1).

The recent focus of research has looked at the economic characteristics of monastic life (Coppack, 2006, 32), such as the agricultural and water management strategies undertaken by the establishment. Authors of such work include Mick Aston (1988; 2000) and R. A. Donkin, (1958; 1962-3; 1964) who has worked on several projects about specifically Cistercian farming practices. James Bond has a number of publications studying monastic fishponds, mills and agriculture (Bond 1988; 2001; 2004); these features will be discussed further later in this section. It is however the view of Tim Pestell that rescue archaeology has in recent years taken the place of research excavation, meaning that there is once again a tendency to focus on architectural plans rather than the landscape context of a monastic site (Pestell, 2004, 218).

Strangely there seems to be a lack of archaeological research of the actual religious aspects of monasteries. One of the few areas where religion is considered to any extent is in the study of individual monastic orders. Works such as those by Knowles and Hadcock (1971), Martin Heale (2004) and Karen Stöber (2007) give lists of establishments and the order they belong to, and more detailed history of the subject is given in publications by Lawrence (1984), Aston (2001) and Platt (1984). In his 1969 work titled *Christian Monasticism*, David Knowles describes the differences in the plans of monasteries depending on their religious orders, with particular reference to Cistercian establishments (Knowles, 1969, chapter 7). David Robinson has several published works looking in detail at specific orders including the Augustinians (1980) and Cistercians (1998). Tim Pestell points out that there is a bias

in research (which is quite obvious when attempting to research an overall view of medieval religious groups) towards the larger monastic orders such as the Cistercians and Benedictines, meaning that we know little about the establishments of smaller groups such as the Gilbertines or Trinitarians (Pestell, 2004, 8). There has also been a limited focus on other sections of monasticism such as the military orders and women belonging to religious houses, which Roberta Gilchrist addresses in her publication *Contemplation and Action: the other monasticism* (1995).

The most recent shift in focus within the study of religious houses is the consideration of patronage of monastic sites, and the evaluation of potential reasons behind their location (Coppack, 2006, 36). With regard to the motives behind foundations and gifts to monasteries, useful works include Susan Wood's *English Monasteries and their Patrons in the Thirteenth Century* (1955), which looks at lordship and patronage, the role which a founder played in their establishment, exploitation of estates and the legal issues involved. The general consensus by scholars in the field is that the main motivation for the endowment of monasteries was for the sake of the spiritual safety of the benefactor's soul, and that of his or her family and ancestors. The gift in itself would assist the founder's cause, but monks within the monastery would also pray continually for his and his family's souls. Indeed, health of the soul was the primary reason given by charters for an endowment (Thompson, 1986, 306; Cownie, 1990, 154-5). A huge amount of prestige also came with the foundation of a monastery by a high status figure, and the establishment would be a 'conspicuous monument' to the founder, family and ancestors, particularly when they came to be buried there as well (Creighton, 2002, 128). Burial was an additional major consideration in the decision to found a monastery: the founder often began an establishment as a burial place for himself and his family (Cownie, 1990, 163). Donations were even made by families grateful to monks for their skills, for example, for the medical skills of Benedictine monks (Cownie, 1990, 165). Lawrence (1984, 69-71) considers that foundations could act as reparations for sins committed, and that foundations could assist colonisation and be for praying for the stability of the kingdom in addition to the founder's soul. These reasons behind benefactions by high status figures in medieval society will be a major aspect of the research undertaken for this project.

There were also social and economic factors involved in the founding of a monastery by a lord, such as providing a boost for the local economy, and the benefit

of having rare skills (such as legal knowledge and financial handling) possessed by the monks now in the locality of the castle (Creighton, 2002, 127). Lawrence (1984, 69-71) also mentions social benefits that a founder of a religious house could enjoy, for example the placing of lord's children in the monastery if a suitable marriage could not be found. The use of the monastery as an expression of social status, affluence, and the piety of the family should all also be considered important in understanding why a person of influence may choose to endow a monastery (Matthew, 1962, 16-17).

Most archaeological work on monasteries looks at post-Conquest sites for the simple reason that this is most of the evidence that is available. We know that there were a number of Anglo-Saxon monastic sites (indeed, a number of the most influential establishments in the Middle Ages began as Anglo-Saxon monasteries), but there is, on the whole, little in the way of archaeological remains left of these to be studied (Pestell, 2004, 2). Authors such as Matthew (1962), Knowles and Hadcock (1971) and Wilkinson (2010), discuss pre-Norman monasticism, and look at the changes that took place following the Conquest. There were already 52 monasteries (all Benedictine) situated in England by the time of the Conquest (Rowley, 1984, 121), and we know that Edward the Confessor was increasingly influential and generous towards monastic establishments as he reached the end of his reign (see Barlow, 1979, chapter 1). Edward was continuing the revival of monasticism that King Alfred had started in the 10<sup>th</sup>-century, meaning that in the years leading up to the Conquest there was already a strong link between religious houses and the king, and there was already a good deal of English land under the ownership of spiritual establishments (Wilkinson, 2006, 24-27).

The arrival of the Normans brought a sudden increase in the number of religious foundations, noticeably Benedictine houses and the introduction of Cluniac priories. Daughter houses (often manned by French monks) of religious establishments in Normandy were set up in England by new landholders, depending on their preferences for particular orders. These preferences were liable to change however, for example with the growth of the Augustinian and Cistercian orders, which replaced the older houses that had formerly been fashionable for high status figures to be associated with in the 150 years following the Conquest (Stöber, 2007, 10). Those pre-Conquest monastic foundations that were continued after the arrival of the Normans were usually rebuilt in the style used on the Continent (unfortunately

removing evidence of former buildings in the process), which is thought to have been a show of authority rather than an architectural necessity (Aston, 2000, 73). There seemed however to be little immediate founding of new monasteries, as the newcomers still thought of Normandy as their home-land; therefore they focussed their attention and wealth on the French sites that they had previously been connected to until later generations felt more at home in England (Matthew, 1962, 28). Platt has a similar argument, stating that the newcomers had 'primary allegiances' to their settlements in Normandy for the initial generation after 1066 (Platt, 1984, 2).

A large proportion of the Norman foundations established immediately after the Conquest were dependent alien priories of larger Benedictine houses in Normandy. Whilst some of these were constructed in existing urban centres, others, as was commonly seen in the Welsh border area, were set up in newly planned settlements (Aston, 2000, 76). There were also a number of priories dependent on establishments located in England (see Platt, 1984; Heale, 2004; Coppack, 2006), but these do not seem to have attracted so much attention from researchers as those attached to French monasteries (Heale, 2004, 1). The growing desire for Norman priests by the new French-speaking elite led to the transfer of French monks to staff these priories (Platt, 1984, 5), but it does not seem that there was a full-scale substitution of English monks with Norman in most cases, although there are episodes of groups of monks being replaced due to alleged disloyalty to the country's new rulers (Cownie, 1990, 133).

The study of monasticism is a very diverse subject, not least with regard to the variety of different religious orders and their locations within very different landscapes, and their possession of numerous different types of architectural styles. For example, Benedictine foundations were usually situated in established areas of settlement shortly after the Conquest (a good example of this is Shrewsbury abbey, founded by Roger de Montgomery in the 1080s (Baker, 2010, 112)), but the later Cistercian houses (Tintern and Dore abbeys are famous examples in the southern Marches area) tended to favour more remote locations (Rowley, 2001, 122). Bond argues that this was a necessity rather than a choice however, as this order was a later introduction when much of the valuable land available for religious endowments already belonged to other establishments. Cistercian land therefore tended to be upland, marshland or woodland areas often in need of some form of reclamation activity in order to be useful (Bond, 2004, 35). Cistercians, with their characteristic

isolated locations, seem to have been a cheaper (and therefore more accessible for lesser members of the 'elite') foundation for lords or barons than other types of institution, as they could be located on marginal, otherwise unwanted land (Pestell, 2004, 159). Menuge (2000), in his article about monasteries and their landscapes in Yorkshire, discusses in detail the Cistercian trait of locating religious houses on poor quality sites, taking into consideration the affordability of such land but linking this idea with the symbolic appeal that such a seemingly desolate landscape held for this religious order which included poverty, solitude and isolation in its ideals.

## **2.2 - Castles and Lordship of the Welsh Marches.**

This section will attempt to address the wide range of literature connected to castle studies, but it must be made clear at this point that it is only possible here to consider some salient themes in what is a very broad debate. Early studies tended to view castles as primarily military buildings, arguing that defence was the first consideration for those building a castle. A particularly militaristic point of view (now very much discredited) is given by John Beeler, who argued that the siting of castles in England was due to an overall strategy of warfare (Beeler, 1956). The military viewpoint has however been challenged in recent years with the rise of 'revisionist castellology'. An important turning point in this transformation of views came in 1979 with Charles Coulson's paper, *Structural Symbolism in Medieval Castle Design*, which emphasised the symbolic aspects rather than the military characteristics of castle architecture. David Austin continued this revised theme by highlighting the importance of the castle's setting within the landscape (Austin, 1984), and the idea really came to fruition with the 'Battle for Bodiam' in the 1990s. The study of architecture at sites such as Bodiam emphasised the practically inadequate aspects of apparently military structures, and drew attention to the domestic elements of the castle (Creighton, 2002, 6). Coulson makes a good point that, while castles functioned almost constantly as a residence, it was only for limited periods that they were militarily active (Coulson, 2003, 1-2). Early studies had therefore created a huge imbalance of work towards what was an occasional use as opposed to what castles really meant to medieval society.

Revisionism did not convince everybody however, with scholars such as Colin Platt (2008) and Stuart Prior (2006) still arguing the dominance of military function in

castle construction. Those who argue against the old view of castles as ‘battleships in the landscape’ (Lowerre, 2005, 1) and consider the other functions necessary for life in such a building include Oliver Creighton, Andrew Lowerre and Robert Liddiard. They consider other purposes of castles including their role as residences for the local lord and his household, their use as centres of administration for the control of resources in the area of influence, and, very importantly, as expressions of social and political power (Austin, 1984; Pounds, 1990; Creighton 2002; Liddiard, 2005).

It is important to remember though that whilst revisionist theories highlight other areas of castle functions, no revisionist scholar will completely dismiss the military side, as it clearly did have a role to play in these sites. Also, members of the revisionist group come from various different study backgrounds and focus on very different areas of research, so they should not be thought of as merely ‘followers’ of Charles Coulson (Creighton & Liddiard, 2008, 163). In addition to being a residence, castles were the social and economic hub for the surrounding area, whose functions in security, trade and judicial administration made them ‘central places’ (Austin, 1984, 73). The social aspect of castle studies is particularly relevant for this project, as one of the aims is to consider the social implications of the castle lord founding religious establishments in his area. Religious connections such as this will have enhanced the lord’s prestige, adding to the status conveyed by the castle itself which will have been carefully designed to portray a particular social image using, for example, designed settings, impressive architecture and a well thought out location.

With regard to the castles in the study area for this project, the Welsh Marches have a very dense distribution of sites (see King, 1983) due to being located on the Anglo-Welsh border, which was a politically unsettled area in both pre and post-Conquest years due to the indefinite and frequently changing border between the two countries. Edward the Confessor had attempted to secure the area in the 1050s by placing Norman lords in Herefordshire, and three of England’s first castles (Ewyas Harold, Richard’s Castle and Hereford Castle) are thought to date from this pre-Conquest period. After 1066, the attention paid to the security of the border area is clear from the large number of defensive sites established there, but we also know that the three earldoms of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford had a unique system of control in Norman England. The lords of the border enjoyed almost kingly powers in their lands, having the rights to create new boroughs, hold their own courts, and even wage war to settle their disputes. It was also perfectly within their rights to expand

their territory into Wales if they were able to do so. These enhanced powers have come to be known as the 'Marcher Liberties', and, although they still held their land on behalf of the king, the only aspect of life in their lands where they did not have total control was in religion (Davies, 1979, 41). This however did not stop them from using ecclesiastical establishments to aid their authority and status; there are many examples of churches, chapels, priories and abbeys founded and endowed by the lord of the nearby castle. The lords of the Welsh Marches were responsible for a large number of monastic foundations from the early 12<sup>th</sup>-century onwards, particularly of the Benedictine order in the early post-Conquest years, but soon giving way to Cistercian and Augustinian establishments (Stöber, 2007, 14-15). Other scholars who discuss the lordship of the Marches include Brock Holden (2008) and Max Lieberman (2010), although both of these focus mainly on Shropshire and Herefordshire rather than the whole of the border area. Darby (1986) gives a detailed study of the three main earldoms of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford at the time of Domesday in his article *The Marches of Wales in 1086*, which provides information on important lords and barons, along with their castles and landholdings, within each.

### **2.3 - Landscapes of Power.**

In the 1950s, a recognition of the importance of landscape history became prominent in archaeology. W. G. Hoskins pioneered the study with his book *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955), and many others (such as Rackham, Roberts, Wrathmell, and Muir) have since taken on the study to make it a popular area of archaeology today. As it encompasses such a wide range of topics, it is important for studies of the landscape to be multi-disciplinary, incorporating historical, archaeological, documentary and architectural studies. Scholars who look at the high status landscapes relevant for this project include Mick Aston, James Bond, Robert Liddiard and Oliver Creighton.

The effect that medieval monasteries had on the landscape of Britain has often been underestimated by researchers as scholars tend to focus more on settlement and land-use themes, which monastic studies are seen as disconnected from (Bond, 2000, 63). Most land in Britain, particularly the south, was already exploited for farming or resources (such as timber from woodland) and the country had contained farmstead and village settlements for many years by the time of the Conquest. Therefore the land gifted to monastic establishments was unlikely to have been completely



undeveloped (Aston, 2000, 23). By their numerical peak in the mid 14<sup>th</sup>-century, monasteries enjoyed the rights of exploitation over a huge proportion (estimated to be as much as a quarter) of the country, also having a more secure hold over their land than secular landowners could ever have. This enabled them to make long term plans and changes to their land, demonstrated by the wide range of economic activities that left evidence in the landscape (Bond, 2000, 63).

Relatively recent studies have looked in depth at aspects of the economic activities undertaken by monasteries, which, as similarly high status institutions, frequently have a number of parallels with those carried out by castle lords. James Bond has produced several publications concerning monastic water management and fishponds. This latter feature was important both in a functional and status sense, and featured heavily in secular and ecclesiastical landscapes. As an alternative to meat, fish were a vital foodstuff in a monastic context due to the restrictions on the consumption of meat (Greene, 1992, 124). Mick Aston's edited volume *Medieval Fish, Fisheries and Fishponds in England* (1988) is a valuable source of information for the subject, ranging from Roman ponds to those of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century. Bond's article *Monastic Fisheries* within this volume covers both the archaeological and documentary sources concerning different types of ponds and fishtraps, adding to the wealth of information on the subject in his own 2004 book *Monastic Landscapes*. Important discussions on the subject of secular fishponds and their connotations of wealth and status are made in Robert Liddiard's *Castles in Context* (2005) and Oliver Creighton's *Designs upon the Land* (2009), including issues such as the aesthetic appearance and religious symbolism of the features in the landscape.

Deerparks were also assets common to monastic and castle landscapes in the medieval period, although they are likely to have had slightly different functions owing to the activity of hunting being forbidden for monks. Generally though, deer parks were used much more for the rearing and management of deer than for hunting (Liddiard, 2000, 51), and were also used to supply resources used for construction purposes, such as timber and stone (Cantor, 1984, 3). Again, there are both functional and social aspects attributed to these features, due to their role in food and resource production in addition to the high status activities (including hunting) that took place within them. They also demonstrated the wealth of the owner because of the huge cost required in order to acquire and maintain parkland (see Bond, 2004; Creighton, 2009; Liddiard, 2005). An additional useful source to reference for this type of feature is

Leonard Cantor's publication, *The Medieval Parks of England: A Gazetteer* (1984), which lists parks (by county) along with the earliest documentary references connected to them, and their ownership at this time.

Gardens are another common feature of the medieval landscape that has come to light fairly recently in terms of academic study, but the ephemeral nature of garden components such as plant beds and shallow ponds leave little evidence for the archaeologist to study (Creighton, 2009, 29). Useful publications on the subject, such as John Harvey's work *Medieval Gardens* (1981), therefore tend to glean substantial information from documentary and illustrative sources such as manuscript illuminations. It seems that monastic and castle gardens differed in function; as 'primarily inward-looking designed spaces', monastic gardens do not appear to have been intended for display purposes as castle gardens tended to be, instead being only for use of the monastic inhabitants, with just the occasional guests also allowed to enjoy them (Creighton, 2009, 49). Other authors who discuss the subject of medieval gardens include Bond (2004), McLean (1981) and Liddiard (2005).

A large proportion of monasteries that were founded in England immediately after the Conquest were sited adjacent to castles in urban areas, such as the Benedictine establishments at Chester, Shrewsbury and Wallingford (Aston, 2000, 75). Priors, along with the castle and associated town, can be seen as instruments of colonisation (Platt, 1984, 5), imposing a high status Norman establishment (as well as a religious one, which was of far more consequence to a highly religious medieval society than it would be today) upon a native population. Castle landscapes often possessed similar features linked to the upper classes that monasteries enjoyed. Robert Liddiard has published several works on the symbolism of the castle within landscape which consider the effects of designed settings (Liddiard, 2005), and Johnson's *Behind the Castle Gate* (2002) is a useful source for the way in which landscapes associated with castles affected life from a social, political and ceremonial perspective. Oliver Creighton discusses 'landscapes of pleasure and display' such as gardens and ornamental landscapes designed to show off the castle (for example walkways and viewing platforms) in his book *Castles and Landscapes* (Creighton, 2002, chapter 4). These issues are discussed in greater depth and in other high status contexts too in his *Designs Upon the Land*, along with subjects such as orchards, vineyards and watery settings (for instance ornamental lakes). Features of the landscape intended for animals and hunting (including dovecotes, parks and game

reserves), and how high status landscapes related to communities, are also examined (Creighton, 2009).

#### **2.4 - Additional Relevant Sources.**

In terms of the architectural study of individual sites, there are several sources available which, although often published a long time ago, are relevant to this study. These include the *Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England* (RCHME) series, which details the historic buildings (including monasteries, churches and castles) located in each county (for example, RCHM, 1931). Although now somewhat dated, the surveys and descriptions of sites included within these are still valuable to researchers. Nikolaus Pevsner's series *The Buildings of England* (for example, his 1963 volume, *The Buildings of England: Herefordshire*) also gives a comprehensive description of each county's buildings, but it must be remembered when using both of these sources that changes (due to, for example, restoration work) may have occurred since these authors recorded their work. For more up to date descriptions and surveys of sites, Historic Environment Records (again available by county, and usually now available online) provide an excellent source of information, as do guide books published by owners of properties, such as English Heritage or the National Trust.

For data regarding the foundation, endowment and patronage of monastic institutions, authors such as Thompson and Knowles and Hadcock have published valuable sources of information in the form of gazetteers. Thompson provides a 'tentative list' of monastic sites that were closely associated with castles in his 1986 article in *The Archaeological Journal*, which also includes the name of the castle lord responsible for the religious foundation. Knowles and Hadcock's *Medieval Religious Houses in England and Wales* (1971) is a fairly comprehensive list of monastic sites, categorising them by religious order and giving additional detail on when they were founded, by whom, and important aspects of their subsequent history. Similar editions on the subject of castles include King's *Castellarium Anglicanum* (1983) which lists the castle remains in each county (although the interpretation of some of the sites included in this project may now be outdated), and works such as Shoesmith's *Castles and Moated Sites of Herefordshire* (2009) which provides a great deal of information about the history and investigation of the sites in this county.

## **2.5 - Contemporary Sources.**

There are also a number of contemporary documents that are valuable in this field of research. Domesday Book, which details the wealth and ownership of the land in England and Wales in 1086, presents us with the first reliable evidence of the land belonging to Benedictine monastic establishments in England, although an extent of this information can be found in previous land charters of the Anglo-Saxon period where they are available (Aston, 2000, 74). It is not however, due to its date of publication, useful for gathering information about the monasteries belonging to later orders such as the Cistercians. Most of the surviving documentary evidence for dependent priories is found in the archives of the parent abbeys, in the form of charters, accounts, and registers. Benedictine records tend to be on the whole more comprehensive than other institutions, although these records too became more plentiful by the later middle ages due to the involvement of the crown and the church in their completion (Heale, 2004, 1-2). Unfortunately however, there is limited evidence in the form of early Norman charters, so most of what we know about gifts given by Norman landholders is gleaned from royal confirmations. These tend only to tell us that gifts were given in order for prayers to be said for the founder and his family rather than elaborating on any other intentions there may have been (Matthew, 1962, 29).

Similar charters belonging to castle sites however are unfortunately rather rare (Thompson, 1986, 305), and it must be noted that there is a particularly sparse selection of documentary material available for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>-centuries. For this area of study, Domesday again gives information about pre and early post-Conquest ownership of land in England. Licences to crenellate and other records such as Pipe Rolls (for example, the *Pipe Rolls of Henry II*) will also provide information about ownership and finances of castles (although not for the early Anglo-Norman period), as may 'inquisition post mortem' documents, which are enquiries into the landholdings of deceased tenants in chief.

### **Chapter 3 - Methodology.**

This study aims to consider the relationship and connections between medieval castles and the religious landscape, with particular emphasis on the linkages to monasteries between 1050 and 1300. The initial task for this project was to decide on the study area to use. Having previously worked on a project focussing on the castles of the Anglo-Welsh Border county of Herefordshire (Hollinghurst, 2011), an expanded study area of the Anglo-Welsh Marches was selected. William I established three major earldoms in the Marches shortly after the Conquest, installing reliable followers in the main seats of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford (Pounds, 1992, 35-6). These lands roughly translate into the modern day counties of Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire (although it is the historic county boundaries that will be used for this project). For this reason, these three counties will be studied individually and compared with each other to give an overall general view of the study area before individual case studies are selected for more detailed investigation of the ways in which castles and monasteries were linked.

This study will be quite similar in terms of structure to work such as the RCHMW's inventory of Glamorgan's early castles, which begins with maps of the area under consideration before detailing individual sites. It also places castle sites into categories such as mottes and ringworks (without masonry), early masonry castles and masonry sites built over previous earthworks (RCHMW, 1991). There are also similarities to be drawn with Neil Phillips' project on the earthwork castles of Gwent and Eryng from 1050-1250, in that he too studies individual sites, but also that his area of focus covers much of the southern march and considers different roles that castles will have had during this time (Phillips, 2006). However, there are few publications that look at how castles and monasteries were connected as a major focus of their study, as is the intention for this project.

#### **3.1 - GIS.**

The first step for the collection of data concerning the three regions was to find the extent of the land falling within the historic counties. This was located using a digitised version (using polygons) of Kain and Oliver's study of the historic parishes of England and Wales (Kain & Oliver, 2001) which used the Tithe maps of the mid-

19<sup>th</sup>-century. It is important to note at this point that these tithe maps are the earliest accurate maps available to us as there are no such documents which are contemporary with the medieval period. By loading the relevant work by Kain and Oliver into the ArcMap GIS program, a base layer, to be used in the creation of maps later on, of each historic county was started. Each individual one involved the creation of a 'polyline' shapefile, compiled from a number of vertexes located along the edge of the shape (in this case the county boundary) which the program links up to give the overall shape. A polyline shapefile rather than a polygon was utilised for reasons of practicality, as it can be worked on in sections (whereas a polygon has to be completed in one go). It was also not necessary for the shapefile to be filled with colour at any point, which is one of the main advantages of using a polygon file. Importantly, the shapefiles were geo-referenced to the British National Grid for ease of use when using the data in other maps.

The next step was to build up this base layer with geographical information about the county. In order to do this, tiles covering the required area were downloaded from modern edition OS maps available on Edina Digimap (EDINA Digimap, 2012) and put into ArcMap with the county border polygon overlying them. Shapefiles for rivers (polylines) and high ground over 150 and 300 metres (polygons) within this area were then plotted. This topographical information is useful for an overview of the area's landscape character, and will highlight possible reasons for the location of castles and monasteries (for example, siting along a major river for a water source or transport links) when these sets of data are added to the maps.

The following stage required research into the monastic and castle sites situated within the study area, undertaken for each county individually. As the aim of this project is to consider the relationship between the castle, its lords and any connected monasteries, information on aspects such as foundation dates, religious orders and castle status are essential. For this reason, spreadsheets for each county were compiled for both types of site.

### **3.2 - Castle Sites.**

The database of castles was built up using a variety of sources. The starting point was David Cathcart King's *Castellarium Anglicanum* (King, 1983) which gives a list of the known castle sites in England and Wales listed by county. However, having been published in 1983, aspects of this information are out of date owing to

subsequent research or the discovery of new sites. Also, some sites in this volume are marked as ‘possible’ or ‘vanished’, so their existence is debatable. Because of this it was vital to combine this information with other studies in order to ensure an up to date, accurate representation of castle sites. Historic Environment Records (available online) were very useful for details about sites from all three counties, as was the *Heritage Gateway* website managed by English Heritage. Ron Shoesmith’s *Castles and Moated Sites of Herefordshire* (Shoesmith, 2009) was an incredibly useful source for research into this particular county, but unfortunately such a publication is not available for either Shropshire or Cheshire at this time.

The information gathered for castle sites included a grid reference to enable accurate representation on the maps to be created for the project. The sites were then categorised according to their date of foundation. Unfortunately, this information is not always available for this type of site. The difficulty we have when considering earth and timber castles is that most pre-1200 structures are not cited in contemporary documents, either in terms of their initial construction or subsequent episodes in their history. It is also worth noting that many sites founded before this date will have been constructed to assist the takeover and suppression of troublesome areas such as that of the Welsh border, but will not have had long active lives past this stage (Hulme, 2009-10, 223). However, as a general rule earth and timber castles tend to originate from the Norman period. As almost all the sites for which a foundation date was not provided in any of the aforementioned sources were earth and timber castles, it was logical to place them within the date range group of 1050-1149. The other date ranges used were 1150-1299, and after 1300. There is also a single site in Herefordshire that is thought to have originated before 1050, so has its own separate category to reflect this.

Another way of grouping castles is by the type of technology used in their construction. Their form was recorded in the database as being a motte, ringwork or masonry castle, but, as many castles were rebuilt in stone, there were also groups included for ‘motte, later masonry’ and ‘ringwork, later masonry’. The vast majority of castles fitted into these categories, but there was a group created for ‘other’, for example one site in Cheshire was referred to in sources as simply an ‘embanked platform’.

The probable status of castles at the time of their foundation proved difficult to work out in many cases, not least because so many of them lack any historical

documentation indicating who founded them and for what reason. However, the groups of royal, major baronial and church castles were decided upon for those sites where sufficient documentary evidence is available, with the other sites labelled as 'minor baronial / unknown'. Where it was available, information regarding the name of the castle founder had already been gathered, giving a rough idea of which group each site belonged to. The major source used to decipher which castles counted as major baronial sites was Sanders' *English Baronies*, which lists the England's baronies and their major leading figures (Sanders, 1960). However, the majority of sites across the whole study area came under the heading 'unknown' for this category.

The final map produced for castles concerned the site's proximity to parish churches or chapels. Using a combination of research undertaken by Oliver Creighton (unpublished) and the aforementioned Sites and Monuments Record websites, information was compiled and sites put into the following groups: 'adjacent to church'; 'adjacent to chapel'; 'integrated church'; 'integrated chapel'; 'urban site'; or 'none/unknown'.

### **3.3 - Monastic Sites.**

Research into monastic sites again used a variety of sources to compile an accurate database of information. A combination of Knowles and Hadcock's *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (1971) and Karen Stöber's *Late Medieval Monasteries and their Patrons* (c.1300-1540) (Stöber, 2007) provided the initial list of sites to work from. Despite the date range that the latter book is mainly concerned with being later than that which is under consideration in this project, it contains useful data about the earlier years of each site, such as the foundation dates and religious order to which they belonged. Again, Sites and Monuments Record websites were very a useful source, providing grid references and detailed, up to date information on the individual sites.

Like the spreadsheets compiled for castles, the monastic sites located within the study area were given categories. The first of these was the date at which it was founded. The date ranges given for monastic sites were able to be much narrower than for the castles, going up in 50 year intervals beginning at 1050 and going up until 1300. This is as a result of the better documentation of this type of site; most monasteries will have had a foundation charter which gives a fairly precise date for construction. The sources mentioned above were also useful in providing information



about the type of monastic establishment and the religious order that each site belonged to. The orders for this area of the Marches included Benedictine, Cistercian, Augustinian, Cluniac, Grandmontine and Tiron monasteries, as well as houses of Knights, Friars and Canonesses. The range of establishment types included abbeys, priories, cells (as well as alien priories and cells dependent on continental sites) friaries and preceptories. Information was also collected about the original founder or patron where this was available.

Once these spreadsheets were completed, the information they held needed to be transferred across to ArcMap in order to create a map representing their data. This was achieved by loading the aforementioned shapefiles of the county boundary and its topographical features into a new map, then adding the Excel data. Selecting 'Display XY Data' created all the represented sites from that spreadsheet as points, which could then be organised into their different categories using the 'symbolologies' section of the file's 'properties' option. Once the relevant category had been selected, the shape, size and colour of each group (for example, the Benedictine group within the 'Religious Orders' category) could be altered to clearly display the data on the map. Once each map for each county was complete, they were exported into a PDF file for ease of use.

Chapter 4 will now present the maps that were created using this methodology. First will be a map depicting the whole study area and the locations of all the castle and monastic sites within it. The following maps represent each county individually, and are displayed on the same page in order for comparisons to be made between the three. Each set of maps will then be discussed in order to attempt to explain any patterns and characteristics arising from this data.

## Chapter 4 - Presentation of Maps.

### Overview of Monastery and Castle Distribution in Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire

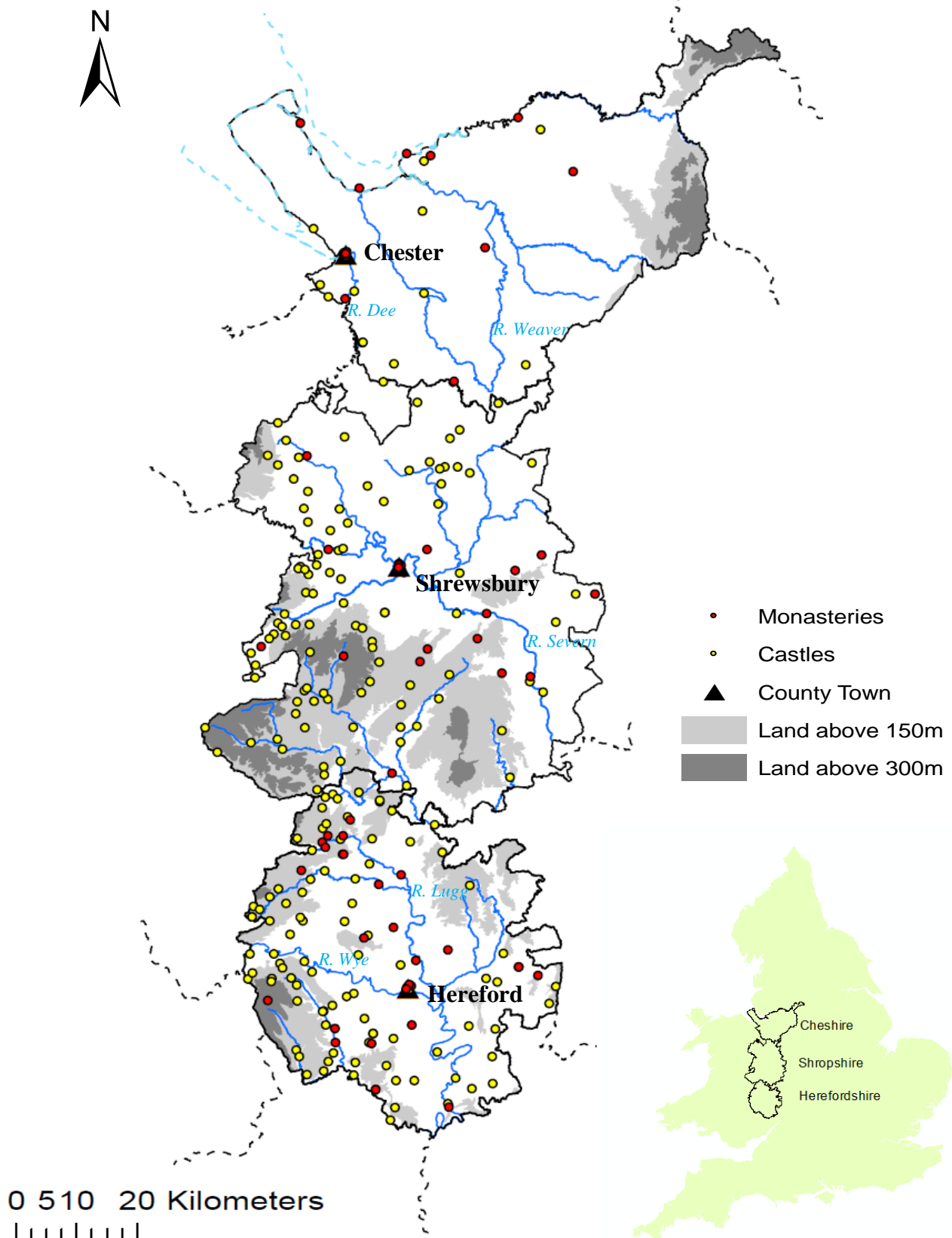


Fig.4.1: An overview of the castle and monastery locations within the three counties to be studied.

This map shows an overall view of the castle and monastery locations in the three counties under consideration for this project, in addition to the geographical features within them. The sheer number of castles in the Anglo-Welsh Marches can be attributed to the fact that no royal approval was necessary for the foundation of a castle in the Marches, so there were no limitations on the building of such structures in the area; indeed, it was expected of the lords here, and royalty even made contributions towards the expense on several occasions (Pounds, 1990, 38). It is immediately obvious from Fig.4.1 that the overall number and density of both monasteries and (in particular) castles in Cheshire is low in comparison to the other border counties. With regard to castles, this is likely to be because the early Norman border between Cheshire and Wales was further west, in present day Flintshire (King, 1983, 66). Therefore the majority of the castles from this period are likely to have been located nearer to the medieval border as this was the area that was likely to have been most unsettled. Another theory is that there was a high degree of political centralization (given by the palatine system of rule) exercised by local earls and bishops in Cheshire, which made it difficult for their tenants to acquire permission to build their own castle (Creighton, 2002, 53). The density and number of castle sites in Shropshire and Herefordshire, where the lordly authority was spread between a number of aristocrats, is far greater.

The density of castles adjacent to the border can be seen in all three of these counties, having been built here by local lords fearful for their own safety and wishing to impose their authority on the existing population. They were also ambitious for the acquisition of new land, and placement here could provide opportunities for this into Welsh territory (Rowley, 1997, 67). In both of the southernmost counties, locating near the border frequently meant that castles had to be constructed on high ground (though, according to Fig.4.1, very rarely above 300 metres). As the majority of Herefordshire and Shropshire's borders with Wales are on high ground, it will have been necessary to build here despite the difficulties that might have arisen as a result (for example, a lack of a decent water supply). The natural geography in Cheshire is very different from either Shropshire or Herefordshire, which are fairly similar to each other. There is far less high ground, and fewer rivers that travel through the county for any great distance. Much of Cheshire's border follows the line of several rivers (such as the Mersey), which may have been a consideration in the location of new castle and monastic sites. It is possible that the excellent water supply had as

much to do with the location of sites as the fact that they are on the edge of the earldom's lands.

Ron Shoesmith makes a good point that correlates with the pattern of castles in the river valleys of the Wye and the Lugg near Herefordshire's border with Wales. He comments that these valleys, as pathways into Wales, were frequently subject to Anglo-Welsh conflicts because of their location. For this reason, a number of castles were built in these areas near the border, 'complementing the natural defences' that the high ground in the south of the county provided (Shoesmith, 2009, 2). The map also demonstrates a point made by Oliver Creighton that there is often a lack of castles (other than the main seat) in the vicinity of the major settlement of an earldom. This is for security reasons, as an untrustworthy lord of a castle could potentially pose a political threat to the main ruler of the area (Creighton, 2002, 53). Shrewsbury and Hereford are among the examples he gives, and can be seen demonstrated in Fig.4.1.

As is the case with castles, Fig.4.1 shows that there are fewer monasteries in Cheshire than in the two southern counties, although the difference is less pronounced. The common feature of all three is the location of multiple monastic sites in the main seat of the earldom. In Cheshire, most sites are located around the northern and western borders, although (as has already been mentioned) for much of their lengths the borders are formed by rivers so this could well be a factor in their location. A number of sites in Herefordshire and Shropshire are also positioned very near to rivers, particularly the Wye, the Lugg and the Severn. This ties in with work by authors such as Bond (2004), Aston (1988) and Greene (1992), which highlight the ways that a good water supply was vital to the monastic community in terms of providing the inhabitants with water, draining waste from the site and supporting activities such as milling, farming and fish production.

Shropshire's monasteries are situated almost in a strip crossing the middle third of the county, whereas the examples in Herefordshire are fairly scattered in all but the north eastern corner of the region. As a general rule the monasteries do not appear on high ground, although there are exceptions in both Shropshire and Herefordshire. A point to note for discussion later on is that in this latter county there are several monastic sites situated in very close proximity to castles; it will be interesting to see what the relationship between the two types of establishment is in these cases.

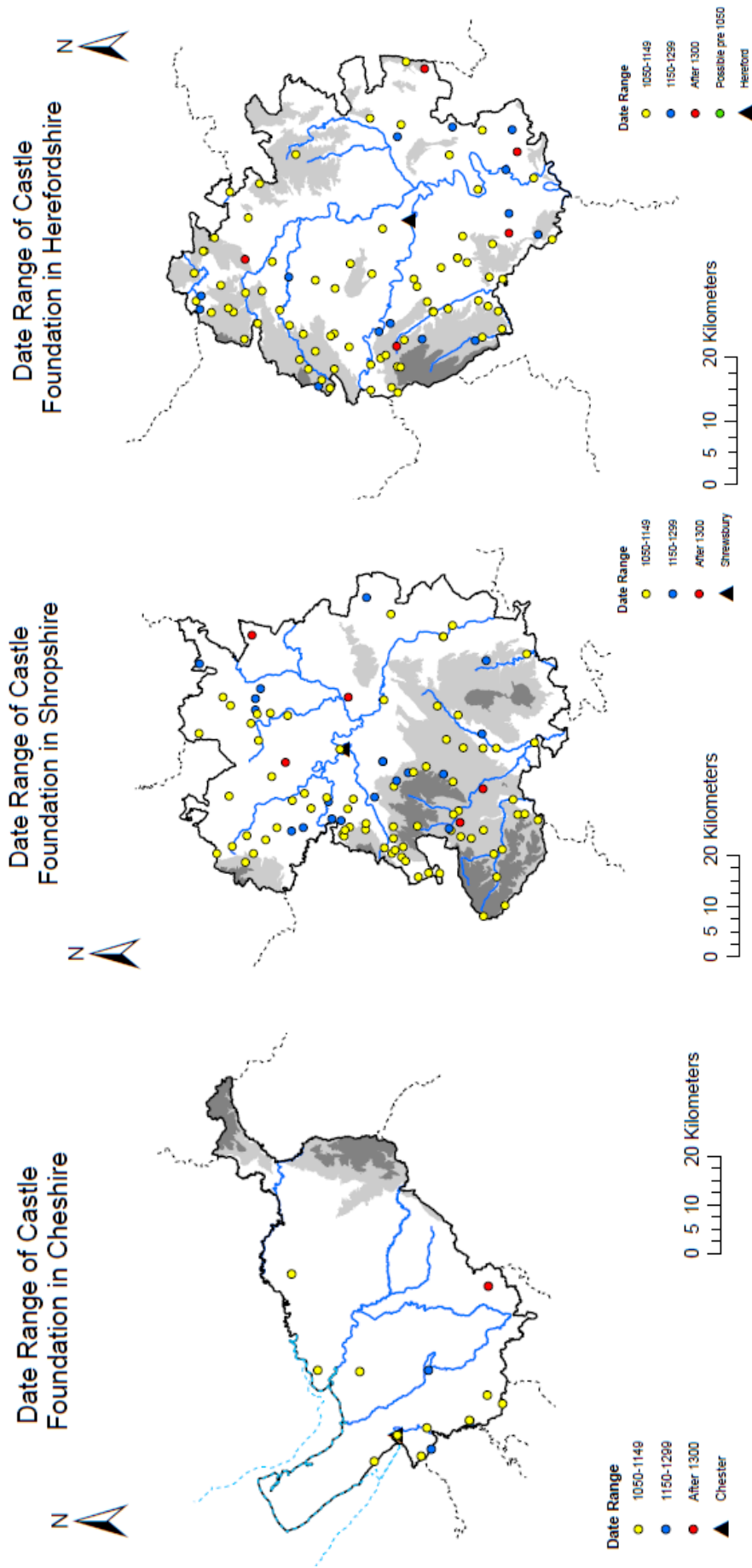


Fig.4.2: Maps showing the date ranges within which castles in Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire were originally founded.

The immediately noticeable trait shown in Fig.4.2 for castles in the whole of this project's study area is that the vast majority originate from the period before 1150. As Fig.4.3 shows, most of these will have been earth and timber structures. Another common feature to note is the grouping of these early sites adjacent to the border with Wales. In Cheshire there are only two sites that have a construction date of between 1150-1299, and one single example built after 1300. Two of the three later castles are some distance from the west or northern border areas (where the early castles are), implying that the emphasis was on status or comfort rather than a necessity for stability as the earlier sites will have been.

Whilst the majority of castles in Shropshire belong to the earliest date range being used here, there are quite a high number of sites dating to between 1150-1299 compared to Cheshire or even Herefordshire. Interestingly, a number of these sites are almost in a diagonal line in the western half of the county. There does not seem to be any real pattern in the five 'after 1300' castles, though only one is located in the area close to the western border.

The castle density in Herefordshire seems to be slightly more scattered than that of Shropshire, in that the early sites are not so tightly grouped along the border. Herefordshire is a special case in that it contains three probable pre-Conquest castles (Hereford, Ewyas Harold and Richard's castle). Hereford castle (marked on Fig.4.2 as being 'before 1050') is thought to have been built by Ralph, who was made Earl of Hereford by Edward the Confessor in around 1046 (Shoesmith, 2009, 13). The first post-Conquest Earl of Hereford (William fitzOsbern) is thought to have been the first of the Marcher Earls to assume control because this area was previously under the authority of Harold Godwinson; it was necessary to establish Norman rule quickly and effectively because of the defeated ruler's potential support here (Davies, 2004, 343). The large number of early castle sites will have contributed to this establishment of control in this region by the new authorities. The later groups of castles are predominantly in the southern half of the county, although there are a few examples in the north west.

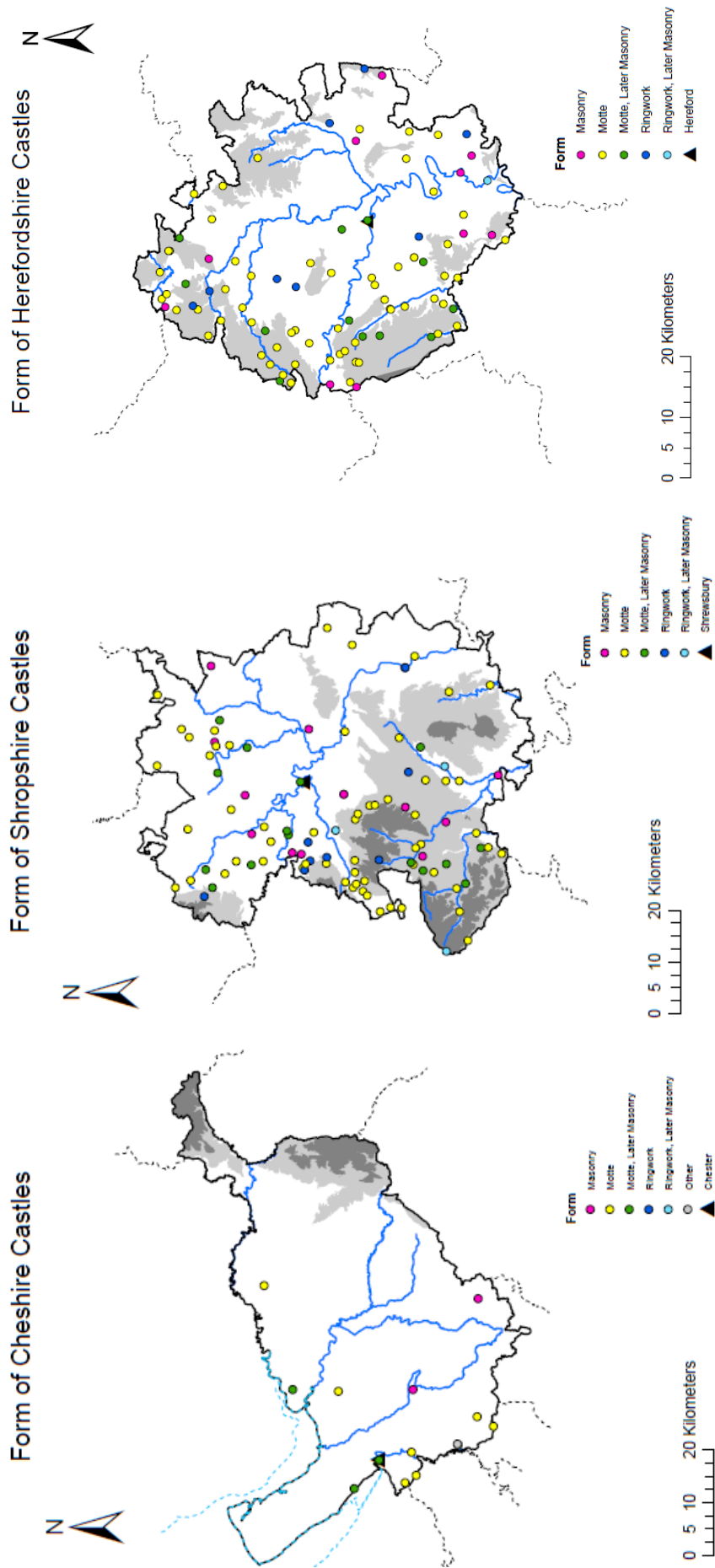


Fig.4.3: Maps Showing the Original Form of the Castles in Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire.

Fig.4.3 shows the form of the castles in each county under scrutiny for this project. Although looking mainly at the type they were at the time of foundation, sites that were originally earth and timber (i.e. motte or ringwork) but were later rebuilt in stone have been labelled as such on the map, as this may be an indicator of the importance of the castle. Whilst it is probable that the number of masonry castles which survive today is significantly less than the actual medieval total, it is evident that most castle sites were earthworks without any stone constructions (Hulme, 2009-10, 223). Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire all adhere to this trend; all contain more mottes than any other type of site, of which a fair number were rebuilt as masonry castles at a later date (marked in green). Mottes will have been particularly useful in areas such as the March, with the constant threat of uprisings, due to the speed at which these castles could be constructed and repaired (Rowley, 2001, 95).

Cheshire, unlike the other two counties, boasts no ringworks, but does include one site in the category of 'other', which is described as simply an 'embanked platform' by King (1983, 68). There are just two sites in Cheshire that were originally built as masonry castles, and both of these are located some distance to the east of the main grouping of sites on the border with Wales. There is a bit more variation in the form of castle types in Shropshire than in Cheshire, as there are a number of ringworks included here. Most of these are in the mid-western area, and a couple were later rebuilt in stone. Castles only ever existing as mottes appear all across Shropshire, but the significant density is to the west and north, with only a few scattered examples in the south east. Many mottes were rebuilt as masonry castles (mostly in the northern half) although there is also a group in the south west. A number of these are adjacent to rivers. Most of the original masonry castles appear on the north and western areas, but (with a few exceptions) they are not particularly close to the Anglo-Welsh border.

A number of Herefordshire's mottes were rebuilt in stone, the majority of which are in the south but there are none in the eastern region. There is an interesting shortage of castle sites in part of the Archenfield area in the south west of the county. This may be due to the area's long established tradition of Anglo-Welsh co-operation and the Celtic customs that were allowed to continue under the Normans in return for their allegiance as soldiers in the King's army when required (Bailey, 2000, 5). This ensured relative political stability and may have contributed to the occurrence of fewer castles being established in south-western Herefordshire than the more unsettled north. There are nine ringworks (including one that was rebuilt in stone in



the far south) but it seems that these were not the preferred type of castle right on the border as none are particularly contiguous with it. Unlike Cheshire and Shropshire, several originally masonry castles (most of which were located in the southern half of the county) were constructed right on the border with Wales.

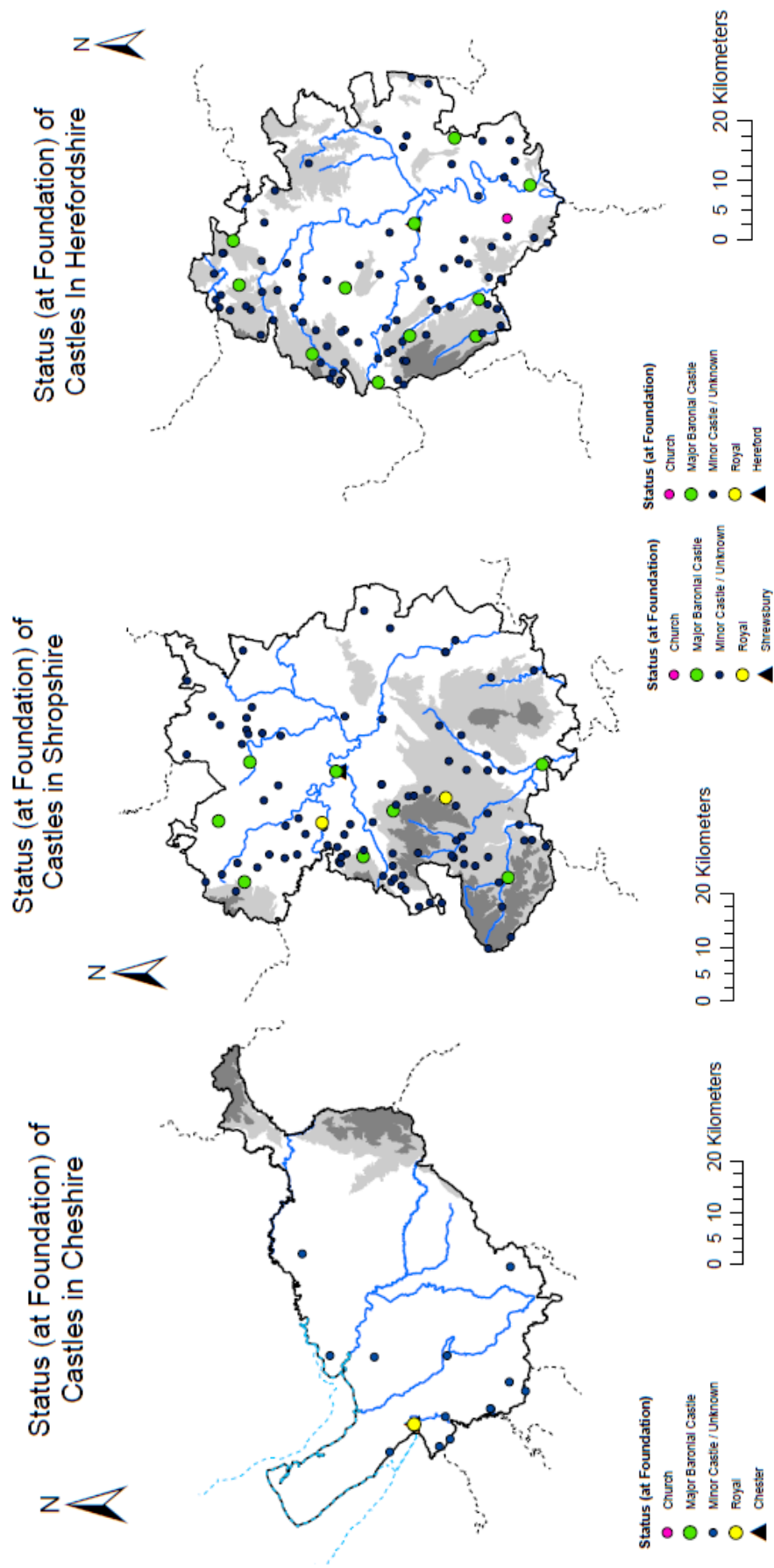
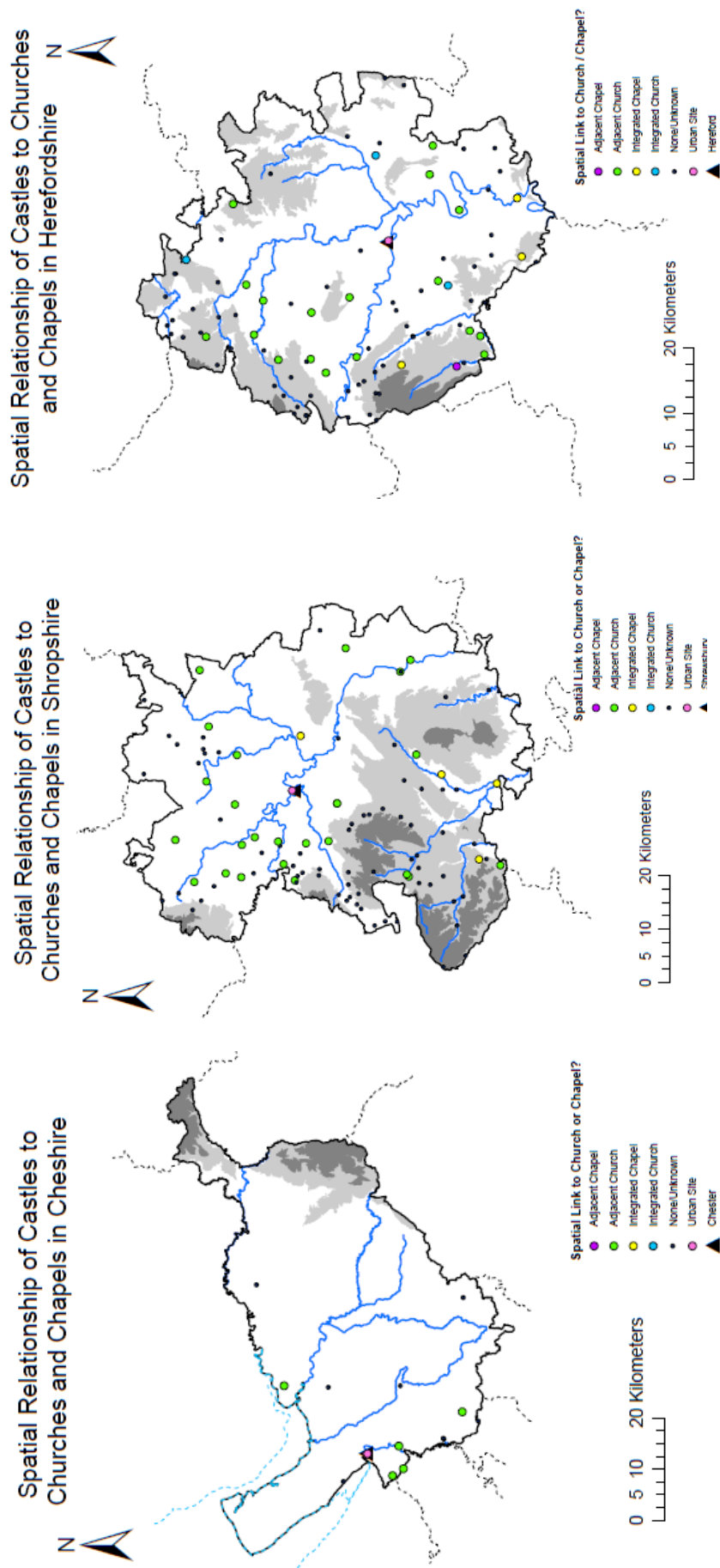


Fig.4.4: Maps of the three marcher counties showing the status of castles when they were founded.

Fig.4.4 demonstrates the status (based on who founded them: a major baron, the king, or a member of the church) that castles held at the time of foundation. A quick comparison of the maps reveals that there is a very noticeable absence of any major baronial castles in Cheshire. The only major castle is the main seat of the earl in Chester, but this castle was originally built by William I so counts as a royal castle for this study. This lack of major baronial castles was perhaps due to the aforementioned system of palatine rule in place in Cheshire, with one figure enjoying overall power rather than authority being given to a number of different lords in one county. Both Shropshire and Herefordshire on the other hand seem to show the latter trait, having a number of major baronial castles fairly evenly spaced across the western half of the county (with the exception of a couple in southern Herefordshire). This positioning emphasises still further the importance placed on maintaining control in the area adjacent to the border with Wales.

Most of the castles in all three counties belong to the 'minor baronial / unknown' category in Fig.4.4. Usually these are the smaller earthwork sites, many of which tended to be fairly short lived. For some of these castles we have a name for their founder, but this information is frequently unavailable. Higher status baronial castles tended to be better recorded, often associated with well-known names such as William fitzOsbern or the de Lacy family, and lasted for a longer period of time.

Not all sites where we have available information concerning the founder belong to barons; others include the king and important figures from the church. Herefordshire contains the only site marked as being founded by an ecclesiastical figure (at Tretire), but does not have any royal castles, which occur in Cheshire (Chester) and Shropshire (Church Stretton and Shrawardine).



*Fig.4.5: Maps showing the spatial connections of castles in Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire to parish churches and chapels.*

The overarching trend shown for all the counties in Fig.4.5 is for those castles which are shown to have possessed a connection with either a church or chapel is for that connection to be with adjacent churches. Often castles were deliberately situated next to a previously existing church for the status connotations that this would bestow upon the lord, as the church was an enormously important part of medieval life. This was a strategy used particularly in the early Norman period. In other cases, the lord would found a new church next to, or even inside, his castle grounds. Vast endowments were often given to churches by high status figures because of the prestige their patronage could show, and it was also seen as a way of spiritual atonement (Pounds, 1990, 222). Oliver Creighton comments that we usually see that the foundation of parish churches pre-dates that of the nearby castle, whereas monasteries were usually established afterwards (Creighton, 2002, 132).

Although the most common spatial relationship shown by Fig.4.5 is the 'none/unknown' category ('unknown' is included here because many sites may have incorporated a chapel but there are no existing remains), the counties demonstrate the spatial connections well, with the majority of the other sites showing that there was an adjacent church alongside the castle. This category (and the example of an urban site in Chester itself) is the only demonstration of any kind of spatial link in Cheshire, and there is a fairly dense distribution of adjacent churches in the north westerly quarter of Shropshire. Herefordshire's examples of these sites occur in the western and southern areas.

These latter two counties both also contain castle sites that have an integrated chapel, most of which are located in the south of their respective regions. In Herefordshire we also see the only cases of churches being located within the castle grounds. This situation would place restrictions on the public access to religion, as locals would have to enter the private zone of the castle to reach the church. This presented the lord with a very dominant position of control over a huge aspect of life for the people in his area of authority (Phillips, 2006, 40). There is also the only known example of a chapel of ease just outside the castle grounds (at Longtown) in Herefordshire, and it is worth noting that there are few castles with any sort of connection to churches or chapels that are located within roughly 5km of the western border here.

When these maps are compared with those showing the location of monastic houses, it is noticeable that there are few monasteries in the areas where most of the

castles with adjacent churches occur in Herefordshire (the central western area between the Lugg and the Wye) and Shropshire (mostly in the north). It seems that this associating of castles with a church was perhaps an alternative display of piety (and status) by a castle lord that later on was expressed by the foundation of monasteries. Also, many of the castles located next to a church are fairly small, early Norman sites that were not rebuilt in stone. Therefore it is likely that siting a castle next to a church was a more affordable alternative to founding a monastery.

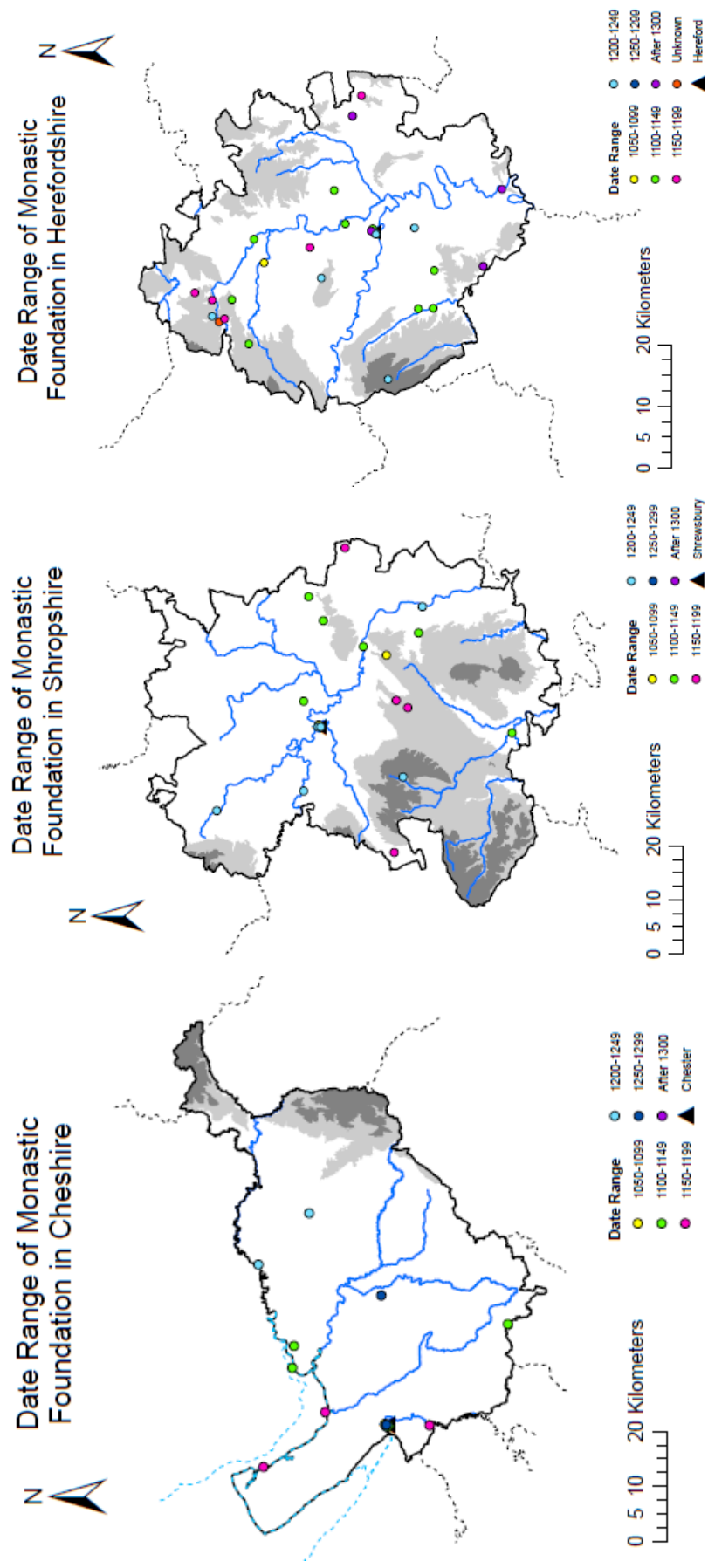


Fig.4.6: Maps showing the date ranges within which monasteries in Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire were founded.

This set of maps (Fig.4.6) shows the dates at which monastic sites (of all types) were founded in each county. There is perhaps a slight bias towards sites dating from the 12<sup>th</sup>-century (marked as green or pink) but overall there is a fairly good spread of sites ranging throughout the time periods that this project is concerned with. The exception here is the limited number of sites dating from 1050-1099 (marked in yellow). This correlates with the idea that few new monasteries were constructed in the period immediately after the Norman Conquest, as the new aristocracy concentrated instead on their religious establishments in their home country (Aston, 2009, 75). Cheshire and Herefordshire only have a single site dating from 1050-1099, and Shropshire only contains two, backing up this theory. There is also a lack of monasteries dating from the later time periods, with Cheshire containing the only two sites originating from between 1250-1299, and southern Herefordshire being the only place where we see any post 1300 sites.

On the whole, the earliest Shropshire sites occur in the central and eastern parts of the county, and there is a noticeable correlation between the 1200-1249 group and waterways; all of them from this date range are almost immediately adjacent to a river. The necessity of a good water supply and effective drainage were simple but essential requirements for the placement of monasteries, so wherever possible, sites were located on a river, stream or spring (Greene, 1992, 57). There is also the reason that a supply of water was necessary for fisheries, the produce of which was an important part of monastic diet (see Bond, 1988). Whilst there are a number of other sites (from across the entire study area) that are situated very close to a river, there is not such a strong tendency of any other date range group.



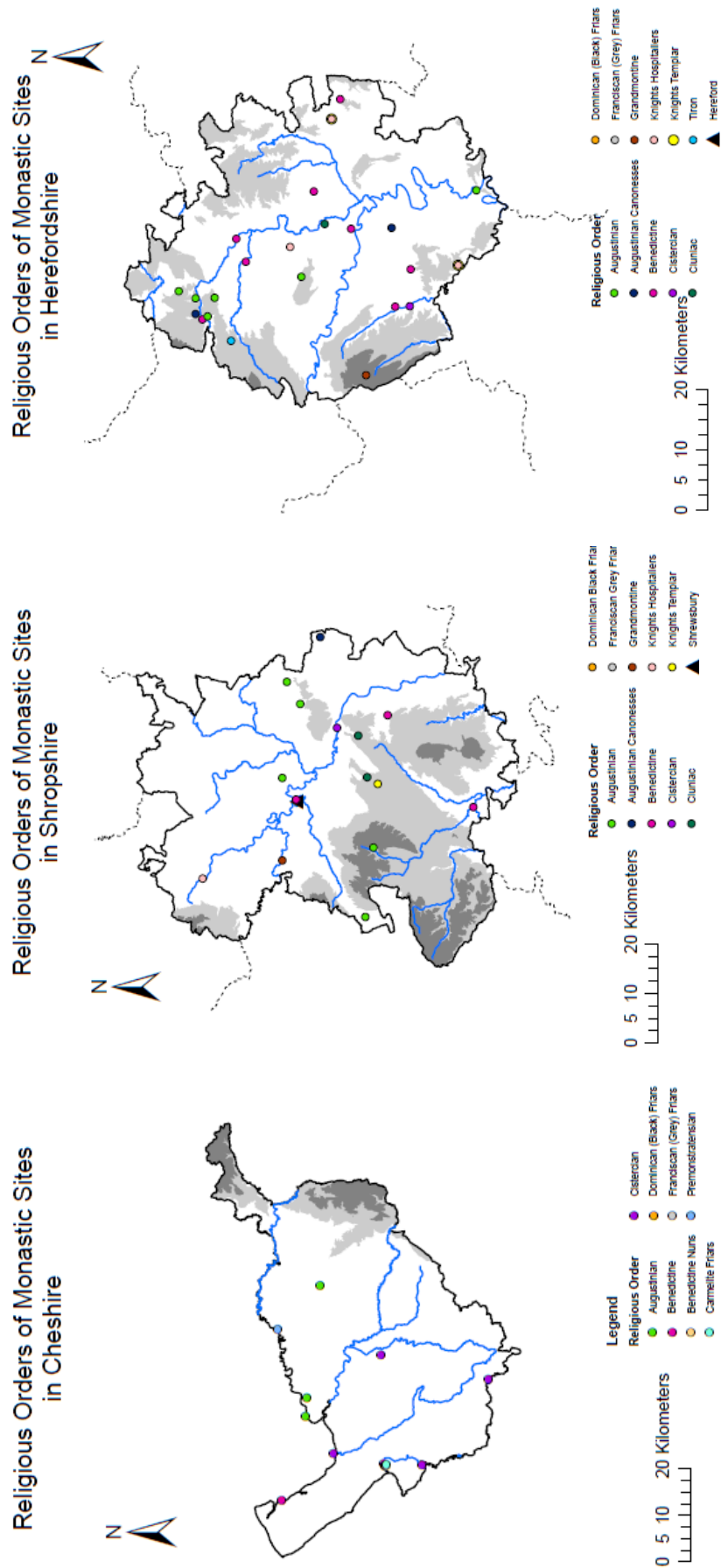


Fig.4.7: Maps showing the Religious Orders of Monastic Sites in Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire.

Fig.4.7 demonstrates the wide range of monastic sites belonging to different orders that were founded in the medieval Anglo-Welsh Marches. The earlier sites tend to belong to the Benedictine order, which never equalled the number of houses (or their religious occupants) that existed in the first 50 years after the Conquest (Knowles & Hadcock, 1971, 14). The major Benedictine abbeys of Shrewsbury and Chester (built by the Earls of those two towns, Roger de Montgomery and Hugh d'Avranches respectively) are some of the earliest in the country, having been built shortly after the new king's foundation of the same order, Battle Abbey (Rowley, 1983, 122). All three counties contain Benedictine monasteries, with the highest proportion occurring in Herefordshire. It is worth noting that almost all these Benedictine sites are located adjacent to the rivers Lugg, Arrow, Dore and Wye, highlighting the importance of a good water supply to a monastery. Herefordshire also includes several establishments of more infrequently occurring orders, such as the Tiron priory in Titley and the three Knights Hospitaller preceptories.

Augustinian sites feature prominently in all three counties (including a noticeable grouping in northern Herefordshire). Augustinian and Cistercian monasteries cost less to found (as a lord could bequeath land that was not particularly valuable to him) than some of the older orders, so it became an option available to a greater number of less wealthy landowners when these orders came into fashion (Stöber, 2007, 10). In addition, it is clear from Knowles and Hadcock's gazetteer of England and Wales' religious sites that a greater proportion of sites belonging to the Augustinian and Cistercian orders were priories dependant on other larger establishments than the early Benedictine order. This could also be a reason that these sites were more affordable to a greater range of people. For example, whereas early abbeys such as Battle or Chester were founded by the wealthiest members of society, a number of Augustinian sites were much smaller and therefore founded by less affluent figures: Shobdon's old Augustinian priory was founded by a steward of the Mortimer family of Wigmore, Oliver de Merlimond (Pfuell, 1994, 11). This more cost effective way of enhancing status and spirituality was likely to be a reason that the greatest proportions of sites in all three counties under consideration here are either Cistercian or Augustinian.

Reasons for the foundation and support of particular monastic orders varied. Royal patronage was a hugely important influence on monastic foundation of all orders throughout this period. The Royal Court played an important role in the

expansion of religious orders, acting as an environment in which ideas and trends could be exchanged between royalty, the highest ranked members of society and members of the clergy (Aston, 2009, 87). Members of the aristocracy who were able to finance significant monastic houses will most likely have wanted to spend their money on those orders that were fashionable at the time and would therefore best demonstrate their wealth and status. The aforementioned subsequent founding of Benedictine monasteries after William I's building of Battle Abbey is a good example of the impact of royal support for a particular order. Ancestral support for a particular religious order was another important factor in the founding of monasteries, but this will be discussed in detail later in the project.

This chapter has brought up some interesting results regarding the locations of castles and religious sites, and has considered some of the implications that these results make with regard to the connections between these high status secular and spiritual sites. The next section will now attempt to look in detail at the relationship between castles and monastic houses by considering the religious patronage of two Anglo-Norman families of castle lords who had a sizable influence on the area of the Welsh Marches. The families chosen for these case studies are the Mortimers, lords of Wigmore (Herefordshire) and the Montgomerys, Earls of Shrewsbury (Shropshire). The case studies will take the form firstly of brief history of the family and their support for religious establishments, before then examining the sites that they patronised within the border area.

## **Chapter 5 - Case Study 1:**

### **The Religious Connections of the Mortimer Lords of Wigmore.**

#### **5.1 - Brief Overview of the Mortimer Family (until 1300).**

It is fair to say of the Mortimers of Wigmore that the fortunes of the family from the Norman Conquest until the end of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century were fairly steady, with few dramatic issues having any drastic effect upon their status as prominent Barons of the Anglo-Welsh March. However, the 13<sup>th</sup>-century saw them featuring increasingly often in important official documents and records, and the heads of the family becoming progressively more influential in national affairs (Hopkinson, 1991, 28). This section will concisely address some of the major figures of the Mortimer family in the 250 year period that is the focus for this project, developing a base for a more detailed focus on their religious patronage later in this chapter.

<b><u>Name of Mortimer Lord</u></b>	<b><u>Date of Death</u></b>
Roger Mortemer (Normandy)	Late 11 <sup>th</sup> -Century
Ralph (I)	Early 12 <sup>th</sup> -Century
Hugh (I)	c.1149
Roger (I)	1154
Hugh (II)	c.1181
Roger (II)	1214
Hugh (III)	1227
Ralph (II)	1246
Roger (III)	1282
Edmund (I)	1304

*Table 1: The succession of the Mortimer lords and their dates of death (Information taken from Hopkinson 1989; 1991).*

The Mortimer family originated in Normandy, with their family castle located in Mortemer-sur-Eaulne (from which the name derives). Like their later *caput* at Wigmore, their territory here in eastern Normandy was a frontier border region (Lieberman, 2010, 67), so perhaps their experience in managing such an area explains their choice as a baronial family on the Anglo-Welsh border. Their base in Normandy

was confiscated however after Roger Mortemer, the head of the family in this period before the conquest, assisted in the escape of a prisoner after the battle of Mortemer in 1054 (Medieval Lands Project). Despite the lands later being restored, Roger transferred his seat to St Victor-en-Caux, a place that the family would remain connected to for several future generations. Baron Roger was a close associate (and army commander) of William I as Duke of Normandy, although it is not clear whether he also made the journey across the channel in 1066 (Hopkinson, 1989, 177-8).

It is with his son, Ralph, the first Mortimer lord of Wigmore, that we first see the family in a position of power in the Welsh Marches. He was granted Wigmore castle, first built by William fitzOsbern (Earl of Hereford) between 1068 and 1071, after the son and heir to this title (Roger) rebelled against the King in 1075 (Shoesmith, 2009, 288). Ralph's lands on the Anglo-Welsh border (gathered around the central *caput* of Wigmore, although the honour comprised parts of both northern Herefordshire and southern Shropshire) quickly became the Mortimer family's main seat in England (Holden, 2008, 27). By 1086 the lands had extended, as fitzOsbern's former properties were now held by Ralph (as tenant in chief) directly of the king (Hopkinson, 1989, 179). The tight clustering of land around Wigmore will have assisted the Mortimer family in keeping firm control over their lands. It is important to note that Domesday (*Domesday*, 506) tells us that only 3 of the 17 manors in the area that were owned by the family at this time were let out to tenants (these were Downton-on-the-Rock, Birley and Kinnersley). It can therefore be assumed (although there is a suggestion of inaccurate recording at the time) that the Mortimers held the majority of their lands in demesne, which ensured their high degree of authority and control over their property (Holden, 2008, 28). Despite this centralisation around Wigmore, Domesday tells us that Ralph held property in 12 of England's counties (the majority of this property was however located within Herefordshire and Shropshire) (Hopkinson, 1989, 179), helping to demonstrate what a wealthy and thus influential family they were even at this relatively early stage under the new Norman rule.

The Mortimers were one of the great marcher families who were influential in the takeover of Wales. They built up a substantial power base stretching west from their base at Wigmore into Maelienydd and Gwerthrynion, but these territorial gains proved not to be permanent (Figs.5.1, 5.2 & 5.3). The Welsh would temporarily regain their lands several times through revolts and uprisings led by the likes of

Madog ap Idnerth, Llewelyn ap Iowerth (Llewelyn the Great) and Llewelyn ap Gruffudd (Llewelyn the Last) (Hopkinson, 1989; 1991). Roger (III) Mortimer's sons are said to have lured Llewelyn ap Gruffudd (who was, incidentally, Roger's cousin) to his death in 1282 by a false invitation of negotiation over lands in the middle March (Davies, 1987, 353). Rees' map representing the land ownership at the time of the statute of Rhuddlan (Fig.5.3) in 1284 shows the Mortimer lands at the time of the final conquest of Wales, now stretching as far as Cwmwd Deuddwr in mid Wales, and the additions of more land in what is now Pembrokeshire as well as the honour of Chirk. Expansion of the Mortimer territory was not only achieved by force; Roger (III)'s highly beneficial marriage to Maud de Braose, who was heiress to not only the Braose family lands but the Marshals' as well, gained him land in the Welsh honours of Radnor, Narberth and St Clears (Fig.5.2) (Walker, 1990, 58).

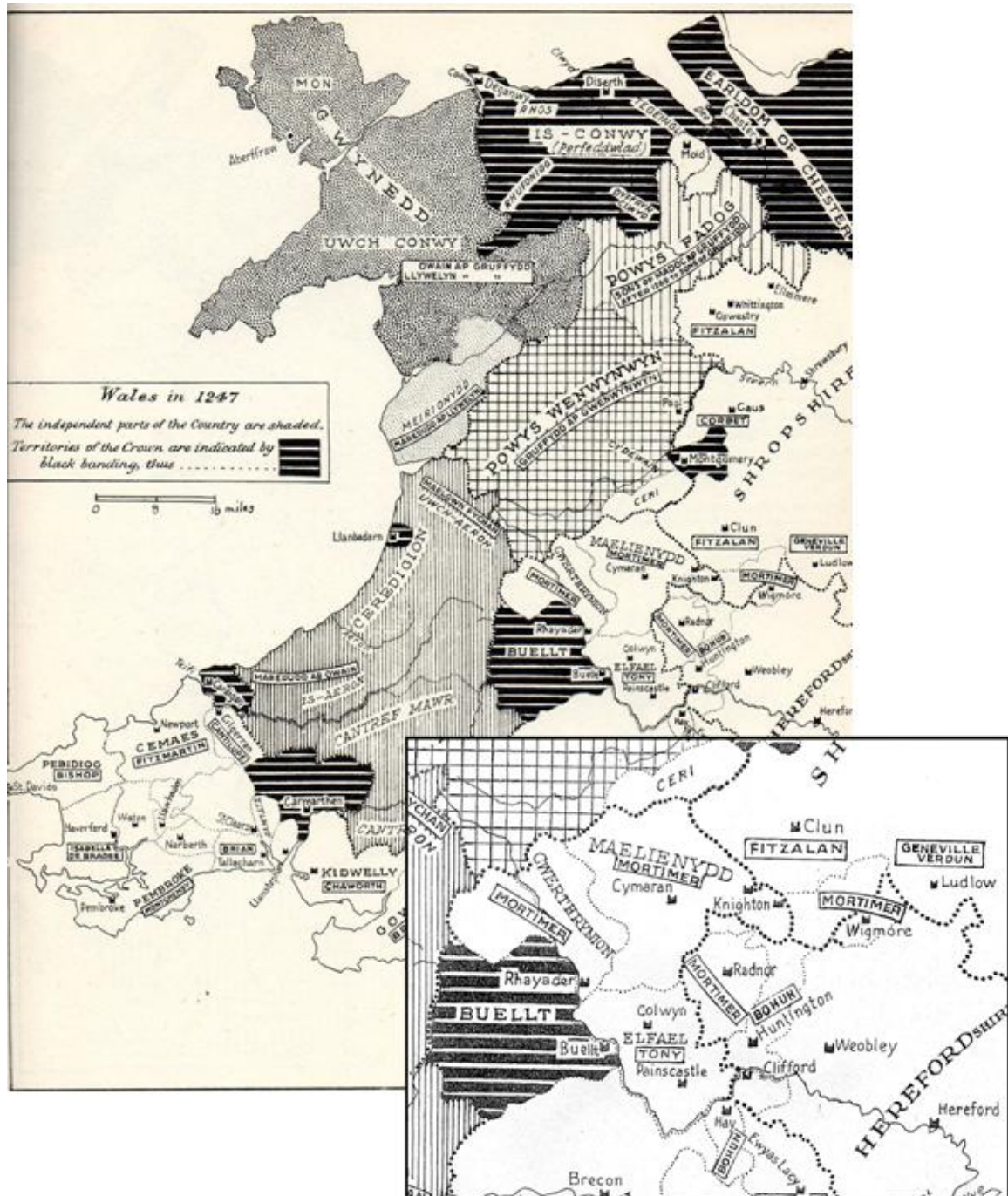


Fig.5.1: Map showing the extent of land in Wales held by Marcher Lords in 1247. Note the position of the Wigmore honour, and the Mortimers' hold over much of the mid-Wales area (Maelienydd and Gwerthrynion) which had been achieved from this base (Map: Rees, 1959, plate 41).



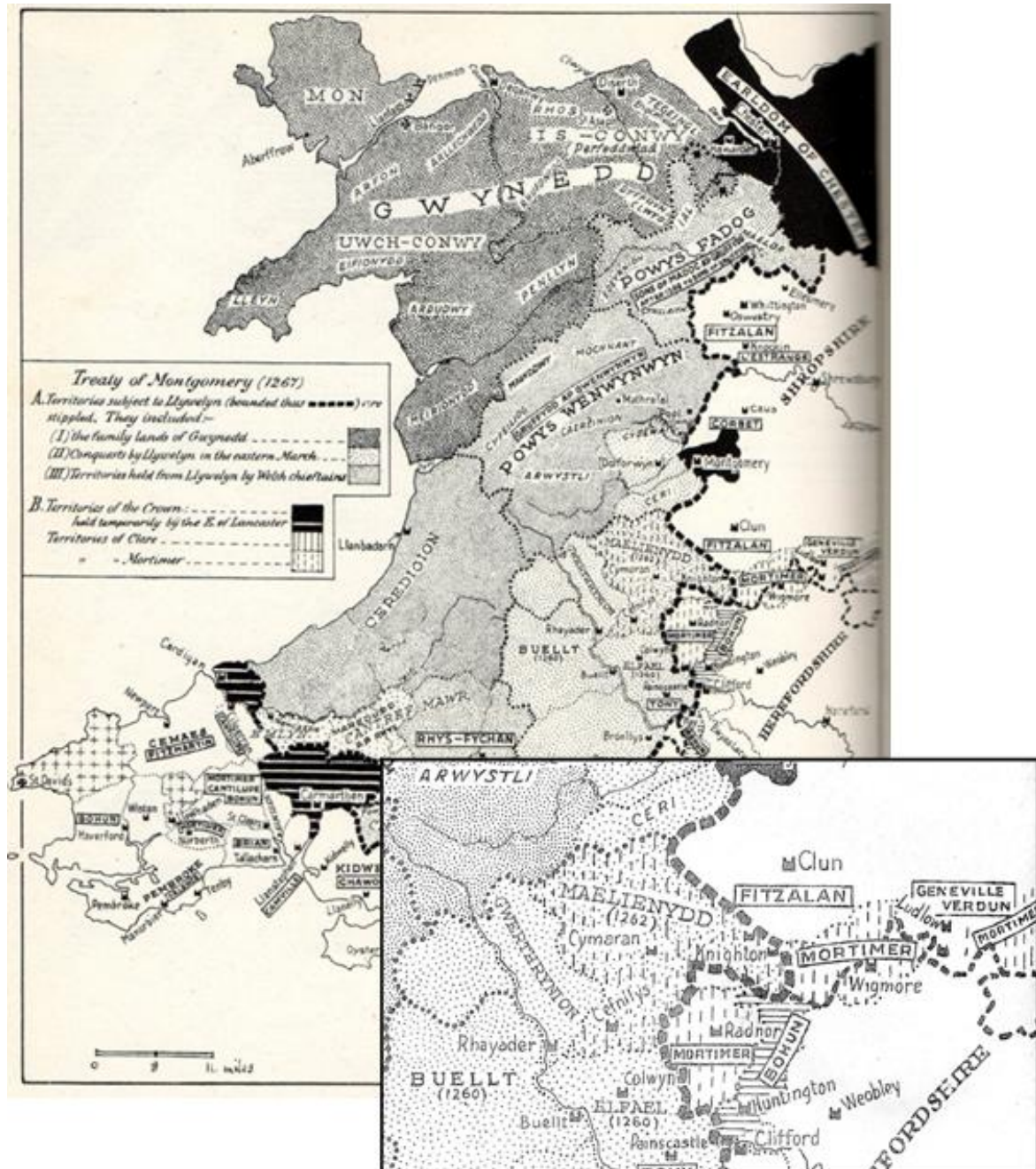


Fig.5.2: Wales and the Marches in 1267 at the Treaty of Montgomery. Note how much of the lands owned by the Mortimers 20 years previously (Fig.1) had now been lost to Llewelyn ap Gruffudd. Roger Mortimer had however inherited (through his marriage) land in Narberth and St Clears by this time (Map: Rees, 1959, plate 41).



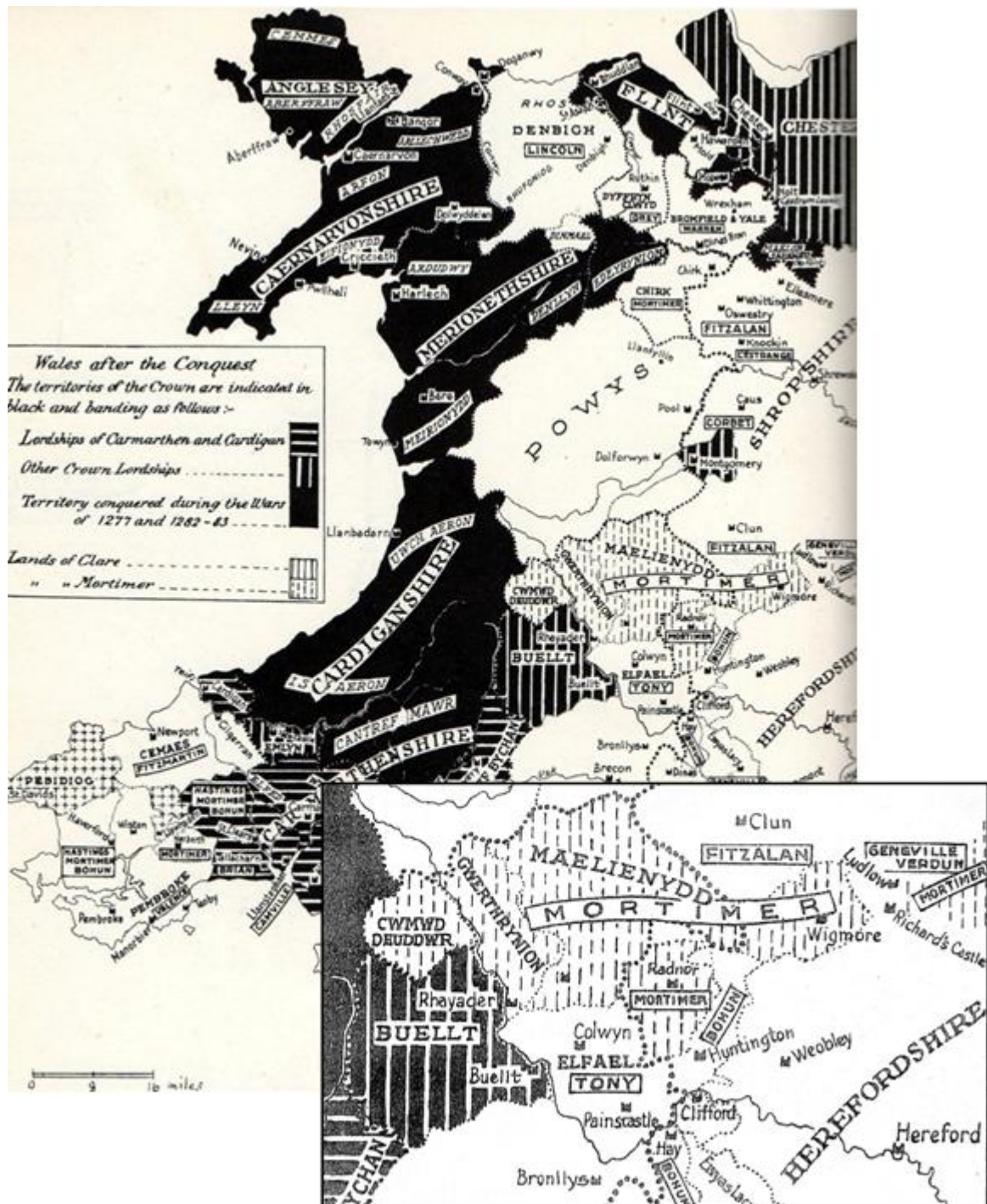


Fig.5.3: Wales and the Marches in 1284 (the Statute of Rhuddlan). Mid Wales was once again under Mortimer control, and the family also owned Chirk and parts of the far west of Wales (Map: Rees, 1959, plate 45).

The Mortimer family had a variable relationship with the kings of England. The majority of the Wigmore lords served in the king's army, and were particularly important in the final takeover of Wales. It has already been mentioned that the early

generations had close ties to William I, and this sort of loyalty to the monarch was continued throughout much of the period. It is perhaps best shown by the unwavering support for Henry III and Edward I of Roger (III) Mortimer, who contributed greatly to the downfall of Simon de Montfort in the Barons' Wars. Prince Edward (who would become Edward I) was captured and held prisoner after the Battle of Lewes in 1264. Mortimer was an influential figure in the prince's escape; the *Brut y Tywysogyon* (*Brut – Herg.*, 255) tells of Edward's escape 'through the stratagem of Roger Mortimer'. He then protected the prince at his stronghold in Wigmore, and upon Edward's accession to the throne in 1272, the new king showed his gratitude by granting extended powers to the Wigmore lordship (Shoesmith, 2009, 290). After the Battle of Evesham during the second Barons' War, in which Mortimer fought, he was granted Simon de Montfort's forfeited county and honour of Oxford as reward for his services (Medieval Lands Project). Roger became a hugely influential figure in England, serving the king as a soldier, courtier, councillor and administrator. He was even part of the small regency council in charge of the country when the king was overseas (Hopkinson, 1991, 33).

There were however times where there was not such a close tie between baron and monarch. For example Hugh (II) Mortimer clashed with Henry II in 1154 over the Marcher lord's refusal to return the royal castle at Brug (Bridgnorth) which had been granted to the family during the anarchy (Hopkinson, 1989, 185). Mortimer must by this time have looked on the castle as his own possession, and it was only after Henry besieged Brug (in addition to the Mortimer castles at Wigmore and Cleobury, all of which the marcher baron had fortified against him) that he eventually deferred to the king's command (Holden, 2008, 24-5). Although an agreement was reached between the two sides, it seems highly probable that there was a degree of distrust throughout the king's reign (Shoesmith, 2009, 288). Hugh and his son Roger (II), his successor, were both implicated in the murder of Prince Cadwallan of Maelienydd in 1179, who was 'travelling under the king's safe conduct' at the time. Roger was imprisoned and Hugh's estate seems to have been appropriated over the affair, although Roger would regain them (along with the king's favour) when he was released to succeed his father in 1181 (Hopkinson, 1989, 186-7).

## **5.2 - Religious Patronage of the Mortimer Family.**

The importance of religion in medieval life is reflected by the attention paid to it by the upper classes. By connecting himself to powerful and conspicuous spiritual establishments such as a church or a monastery, a castle lord could ensure the safety of his soul and demonstrate his own and his family's piety, but also display his wealth and prestige in society (Matthew, 1962, 16-17). Other benefits in the event of a monastic foundation by a high status figure included the provision of a burial place for the family, in addition to economic benefits such as support to the local economy and the proximity of monks with skills like legal knowledge and monetary handling (Creighton, 2002, 128). However, whilst a number of castles had a connected monastery, it is by no means a majority. Instead, it seems to be more characteristic of baronial capita than castles in general. Therefore the founding of a monastery can be said to be an 'act of piety considered desirable by many but achieved by few' (Thompson, 1986, 305). The Mortimers of Wigmore were able to flaunt their affluence and piety by connecting themselves to religious establishments in a number of different (but typical) ways throughout the time period in question for this project. They were known to have founded churches and monasteries, endowed them with land and confirmed their possessions. There were also instances where they entered a monastery as a member of the church (such as a canon), and, after Wigmore Abbey was built in the latter stages of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century, the majority of the family were buried in their own establishment alongside their castle. This section will consider the religious patronage of the Mortimer family around their base in the border region and in Wales.

The monastic establishments connected with the Mortimer family in the Anglo-Welsh border area have a common theme in that they tended to be located in rural areas. Wigmore Abbey is situated roughly 1.5 kilometres to the north of the village of the same name, in the middle of a large flat arable area surrounded by rolling hills. The other large abbey associated with the family in the area is Abbey Cwmhir, which is in a similarly remote location in a valley (its name literally means 'abbey in the long valley' in Welsh). Even the smaller establishments of St James' church, Wigmore, and Shobdon Priory (built by Hugh Mortimer's steward Oliver Merlimond) were located on land just outside their respective settlements. This characteristic of rural locations is likely to be due to the religious orders that each establishment belonged to: Wigmore Abbey and Shobdon Priory housed Augustinian

canons, and Abbey Cwmhir (perhaps different because it was not originally a Mortimer foundation) belonged to the Cistercian Order (Knowles & Hadcock, 1971, 144; 143; 112).

It is a major characteristic of the Augustinian and (particularly) the Cistercian orders to be situated in remote areas. The order of the Augustinian canons first appeared in England at Colchester in around 1100 (Knowles & Hadcock, 1971, 137) and quickly spread throughout the country, coming into fashion for the foundations of major landowners due to king Henry I's patronage (Greene, 1992, 15). Following the king's example by founding sites belonging to this order will have been an effective way of displaying wealth and status, as well as showing loyalty to the monarch. Foundation of Augustinian sites was also likely to have been linked to the connections and loyalties of the patron's family (Aston, 2009, 96), as was probably the case with Wigmore Abbey; its original founder (Hugh II) was known to have continued the support of his ancestors to the Augustinian abbey of St Victor-en-Caux in Normandy (Hopkinson, 1989, 187) and therefore chose the same order for his establishment. Wigmore was a house of the 'sub-group' of the Victorines within the Augustinian order (originating at St Victor's, Paris, and who St Victor-en-Caux also belonged to), whose monasteries were typically isolated and self-sufficient (Aston, 2009, 94). The Augustinian canons seem to have been the preferred order of the Mortimer family, as this is the group to which their foundations at Wigmore, Shobdon and St Victor-en-Caux all belong.

Their connection with the pre-existing Abbey Cwmhir (a Cistercian house) came with their takeover of the lands of Gwerthrynion, hence the different religious group that this monastery belonged to. The order appeared in England in circa 1128, and by 1140 was deeply rooted in the country (Coppack, 2006, 54). The establishment of Cistercian abbeys seemingly played a part in the development of dynasties, as seen by the number of royal foundations in England and Wales. The white monks seem have held a particular appeal to the native Welsh princes (see Pryce, 2005), and King Stephen, Henry II and John are all linked to numerous foundations of this order (Aston, 2000, 87). Cistercian monasteries are characteristically remote, as seclusion and self-sufficiency were major criterion for this monastic group (Greene, 1992, 19). Early sites tended to be located on marginal or poor quality land, so the benefactors were in reality not inconveniencing themselves a great deal by granting their land (Aston, 2000, 88). Menuge (2000), in his study of monasteries and landscapes in

Yorkshire, gives a detailed analysis of the Cistercian trait of locating religious houses on poor quality sites, taking into consideration the affordability of such land and combining this with the symbolic appeal that such a seemingly desolate landscape held for this religious order (which included poverty, isolation and solitude in its ideals) to help the monks within the monastery live 'a renewal of the Holy Rule' of the earliest Benedictines. He also brings up an interesting point that monks set out to 'conquer' the harsh landscape, much as a feudal lord conquered new territory, both for the glory of God and for the spiritual security of the benefactor who granted the land (Menuge, 2000, 28-29). This comparison to the subjugation of new lands will have had an appeal to many aristocratic figures involved in controlling new territories, in addition to the limited cost and spiritual advantages that a benefaction would bestow on them.

One of the ways in which castle lords connected themselves with monasteries was by direct foundation. Foundation charters frequently included clauses making it obligatory for the abbey to recognise certain requirements of the founder, including spiritual council, prayers for the founding family, and often an agreement for the founder to enter his monastery as a monk in the later years of his life (Greene, 1992, 5). The Mortimers were founders of several monastic establishments, with Wigmore Abbey being their most notable example. The Wigmore Chronicle reveals that the foundation stone of the religious house was placed in 1172, although it only became a permanent site in the later years of Hugh (II) Mortimer's life (Ricketts, 2011, 1). The abbey church was dedicated in 1179 (Hopkinson, 1989, 187), but the monks that the abbey was built to house were originally located in nearby Shobdon in a priory founded by Hugh's father's chief steward, Oliver Merlimond. Hugh granted him the land at Shobdon to initially rebuild the chapel of St Juliana; Merlimond made it into a parish church and later transformed the church into a priory to house two canons from the abbey of St Victor, Paris. Another foundation associated with the Mortimers is the parish church at Llanfigan, which was founded by a Ralph (not the lord of Wigmore) in 1272 (Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust HER, No. 5244), showing the importance of other types of religious building.

An important Mortimer site outside of the Marches area (and indeed England) is the abbey of St Victor-en-Caux, in Normandy. Although he may not have been the original founder (it is unclear who this was) the first Mortimer (or Mortemer, at this time) on record, Roger, is said to have been one of the original major benefactors, and

it was his own and his wife's support that was responsible for the priory being upgraded to an abbey in 1074 (Duncan, 1839, 385). Unlike the later foundation at Wigmore, St Victor's was situated some distance from the Mortimer *caput* in Normandy at Mortemer-sur-Eaulne (Fig.5.4). Typically for an Augustinian site, it was fairly isolated; there is now a small rural settlement on the site which even today is quite remote from major settlements in north-eastern Normandy. Although not in the area under consideration for this project, this is an important site to mention as many of the Mortimers remained connected to this monastery, as will be discussed later.



*Fig.5.4: The locations of the Mortimer castle at Mortemer-sur-Eaulne (marked by an 'A') and their foundation of St Victor-en-Caux (green arrow) in Normandy, showing a distance of approximately 40km between the two (Map: Google Maps, 2012).*

It is important to remember with regard to new foundations in the early Norman period that the first few generations of barons, although they had received land and titles in England, they still considered Normandy to be 'home'. This ties in with the theories of scholars such as Aston (2000, 74) who point out the lack of new monasteries (with notable exceptions such as the Benedictine, urban abbeys at Shrewsbury and Chester) established immediately after the Conquest. Initially Norman barons tended to concentrate their monastic endowments in Normandy as this was where they felt their responsibilities and interests lay, but after the first few generations there was a noticeable increase in those founding establishments linked to their estates in England. The Mortimer family again reflect this trend, as their first



completely new religious foundation (Wigmore Abbey) was not built until several generations after the Norman Conquest. There was however a tendency for early Norman lords to use pre-existing buildings to 'found' a new religious establishment. For example, St James' church, Wigmore, held 'a college of secular priests' from around 1100 until 1141 (English Heritage National Monuments Record, No. 108443) (secular priests being those that do not belong to any particular religious order or society). It can be assumed that these were the three prebends that Ricketts (2011, 1) refers to as being installed in the parish church at Wigmore by the first Mortimer lord of the manor, Ralph. Whilst being similar to a monastery, canons within a college had a more flexible life in that they were not confined to the cloister, but could live in the world and carry out services for the founder (Pounds, 1990, 233).

Foundation was not the only way a lord could patronise a monastery. By far the most common form of patronage carried out by the Mortimer lords of Wigmore was the granting of land to monastic institutions. Gifts of land from benefactors were often properties that were insubstantial or some distance from the monastery, as a member of the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>-century upper classes would frequently own land that was scattered over a large area; the granting of this land to a religious institution would little inconvenience the benefactor but still give him a spiritual advantage. Consequently the possessions of a monastery were often strewn over a wide area (Greene, 1992, 133). An excellent example is St Victor-en-Caux, which Hugh (I) had enriched with land in Normandy (and we know from a charter of the Archbishop of Rouen that Hugh II and his son Roger were also benefactors) (Hopkinson, 1989, 187) but which was also presented with land from his new English estates in Wiltshire (in Clatford and Hullavington) in around 1100 (English Heritage National Monuments Record, No. 220621).

Other grants of land by the Mortimer family include Edmund's parkland given to Abbey Cwmhir in 1241 (Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust HER, No. 32810) and the vill of Shobdon granted to Merlimond for his new priory. An interesting grant was made to Wigmore Abbey by Roger (II), who donated the very valuable pasture adjacent to the monastery known as the 'treasure of Mortimer' (Burke, 1831, 131). This is a demonstration of how highly valued the family's own foundation was through the generations of the Mortimer lords.

Burial was a massive consideration in the founding of new monasteries, as the founder often began an establishment at least partly as a burial place for himself and

his family (Cownie, 1990, 163). Burial in a monastery begun by an ancestor could also be a show of status and prestige, turning the abbey into a ‘conspicuous monument’ to the family and predecessors (Creighton, 2002, 128). It is thought (although there are no extant monuments to them) that there were eleven members of the Mortimer family buried within the abbey church itself at Wigmore (Herefordshire SMR, No. 1652), with Hugh (II) (the original founder) becoming the first when he died in 1181 (Hopkinson, 1989, 187). It seems that, after the foundation of the abbey, this would be the chosen site for the Mortimer dynasty to be buried no matter how or where they died; even the infamous Roger, the first Earl of March, who was executed for treason in London in 1330, was later brought back to his family’s traditional resting place in Wigmore (Burke, 1831, 133).

Members of the founding family also commonly used a monastery as somewhere for members of the family to retire to, or to enter the church as a career. Unusually there seems to be little evidence to say that the lords of Wigmore used their adjacent abbey for this purpose, although there were instances of family members entering the church elsewhere. Ralph II’s son Peter John, as he was not the first son and so heir to the title of lord of Wigmore, spent his life as a grey friar at Shrewsbury (Burke, 1831, 132). Also, Edmund I, who was a canon of Hereford Cathedral and entitled to the prebend of Hunderton, was the second son of Roger III and so, similarly to Peter John, was headed for a life in the church. He was not expected to inherit his father’s lands and title, but, as his elder brother died before his father, he had to abandon his life in the church to take on the Mortimer lordship (Hopkinson, 1995, 303).

### **5.3 - Case studies of sites patronised by the Mortimer family.**

This section will look in detail at the sites of Wigmore Abbey, Shobdon Priory, St James’ Church (Wigmore), Cwmhir Abbey and the Church of St Andrew, Presteigne. These sites are known to have major associations with the Mortimer family in the area around their family seat at Wigmore and in their acquired lands in Wales. St Meigan’s Church (Llanfigan, in Breconshire) is also known to have been founded on the site of a pre-existing church by a Ralph Mortimer of Pencelli Castle in 1272 (Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust HER, No. 5244) (note that this was not the lord of Wigmore at the time, as this was Roger (III) Mortimer) but, as little more detail than this is known about the benefaction, this will not form one of the study sites here. The site of St



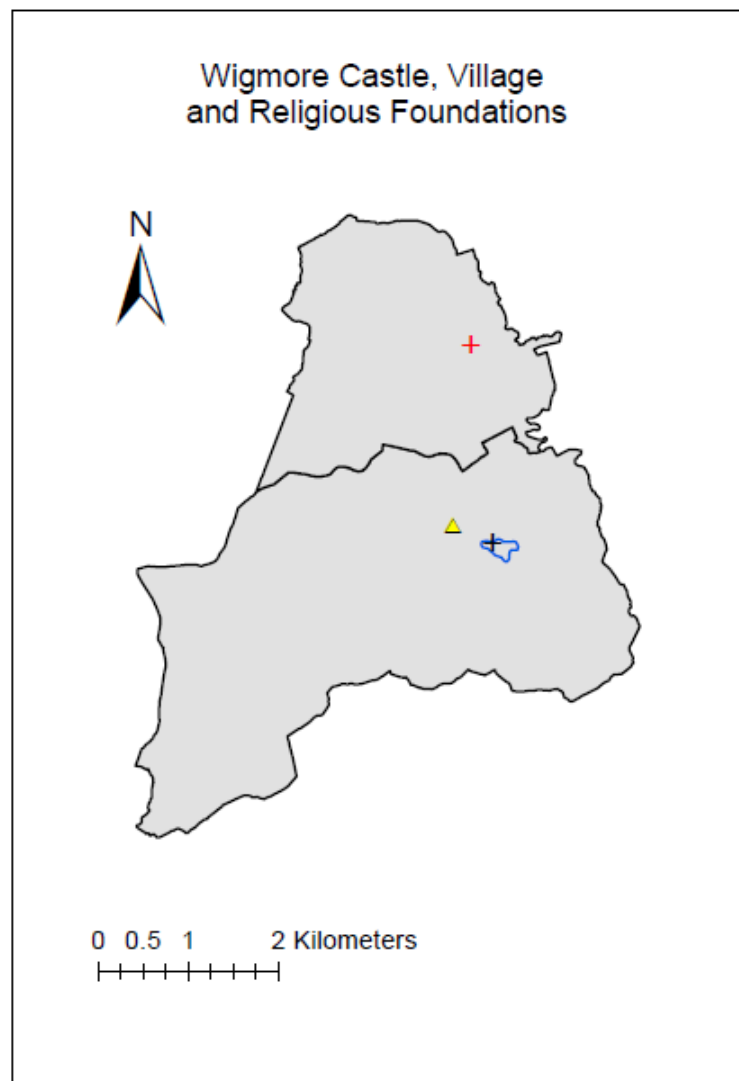
Victor-en-Caux, Normandy, is also not included despite its major links to the family as it is outside the study area for this project.

### **5.3.1 - Case Study Site:**

#### **Wigmore Abbey.**

The construction of Wigmore Abbey was begun in 1172 by Hugh (II) Mortimer. The church was dedicated to St James seven years later (Knowles & Hadcock, 1971, 179) by Bishop Robert Foliot, and was the only building within the abbey complex to survive destruction at the hands of Welsh rebels during the reign of King John (Pevsner, 1963, 321). The establishment was originally set up to house the Augustinian (Victorine) canons of St Victor's, Paris, who had previously resided at Shobdon since about 1140 in the priory set up by Hugh's chief steward Oliver Merlimond (as will be discussed later), but, following a dispute between the two men resulting in the land being returned to Hugh, the canons left Shobdon to temporarily inhabit several sites before eventually settling on the final location to the north of Wigmore and the Mortimers' castle (Pfuell, 1994, 12). The new monastery was on a far bigger scale than Shobdon had been, housing an abbot, a prior, and 17 canons (Knowles & Hadcock, 1971, 179). The majority of the monastery's buildings were reconstructed by Edmund Mortimer (Earl of March) in 1379 (RCHME, 1934, 1), and a year later it increased in status when it became a mitred abbey. But, like most of its kind, Wigmore Abbey was dissolved under Henry VIII, being surrendered on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1538 (Knowles & Hadcock, 1971, 179).

There is an interesting story concerning the monks of Wigmore Abbey from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Bishop Orleton (who was Bishop of Hereford from 1317–27 and a friend of Roger, First Earl of March) conducted a recorded visitation of the monastery, and, finding it rather lacking in discipline, forced the abbot to resign and sent a number of monks to serve elsewhere. Those remaining were given a strict new set of rules to adhere to, including the instruction that they were not to have personal servants, or own private horses, greyhounds, sheep or pigs. The inclusion of these rules in the report implies that the monks had been hunting (an activity forbidden for the members of a monastery) and were also keeping livestock for feasting purposes (Knowles, 1956, 100). The role of deer parks linked to hunting will be considered in more detail later in the discussion chapter of this project.



*Fig.5.5: A map showing the locations of sites within the parishes of Wigmore and (to the north) Adforton, within which Wigmore Abbey is located (red cross). Wigmore village is marked in blue (using a rough outline of the area from the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map), St James' Church is represented by a black cross and Wigmore castle a yellow triangle (Map: author's own).*

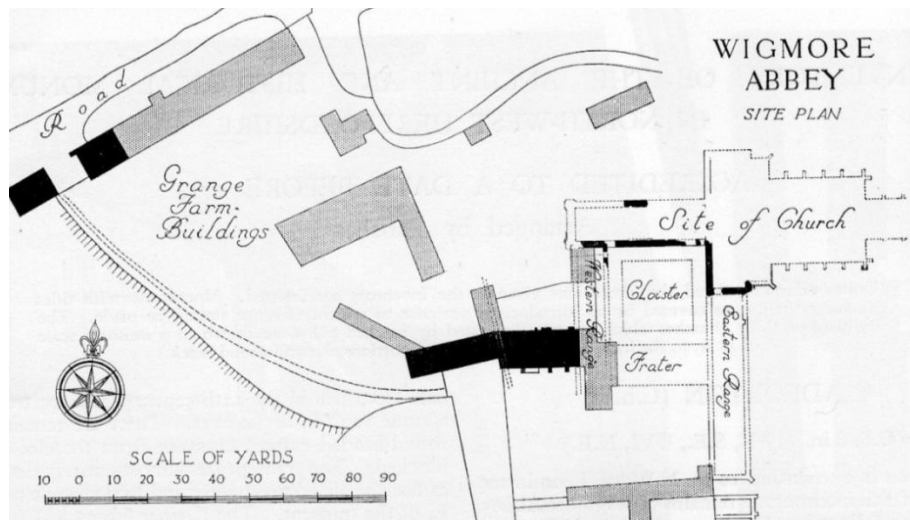
The abbey is situated in a wide, flat valley in Wigmore's neighbouring parish of Adforton. As Fig.5.5 shows, it is located approximately 2 kilometres to the north of Wigmore castle, which in turn is roughly half a kilometre from the village. Sometimes monasteries were located in or directly adjacent to settlements and castles, but in this case it seems that a site was chosen where the functions of religion and those of the secular world could be kept separate because of the distance between them. One of the previous sites of the monastery after its transfer from Shobdon was to Wigmore

village itself; however, it was moved again owing to the canons finding their civilian neighbours ‘very vulgar and coarse’ in the way they spoke, and who made the necessary contemplation and solitude rather difficult (Platt, 1984, 28). It was common for monasteries to be located immediately alongside a castle in the case of its lord being the original founder. However, if this was not practical for some reason, the monastery would usually be situated somewhere that it was still visible from the lord’s base (Creighton, 2002, 128). This was the case at Wigmore; the grounds of the abbey are visible in the distance from the castle owing to its high position on the ridge of the valley side giving panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. In effect, the siting of a monastery such as this could be an addition to the religious elements of a castle’s designed landscape. Liddiard (2005, 110) points out the attention castle lords paid to incorporating spiritual symbolism into the landscape using elements such as rabbit warrens (rabbits were apparently thought to symbolise religious salvation) and water features. The addition of a monastery within the vicinity of his castle would be an even more conspicuous feature with which a castle lord could display his religious devotion.

All that remains of the monastery today are ruins and earthworks. Fragments of the abbey church are still standing, which Pevsner (1963, 322) lists as being the gable wall of the south transept, lower parts of the western wall, and the southern wall of the nave. He also notes that it is possible to tell that the nave was vaulted in stone. The remains of the church are thought to date to the foundation (so are from the late 12<sup>th</sup>-century) (Herefordshire SMR, No. 1652), and there are a few other fragments on the site dating to a similar time. These include parts of the grange connected to the gatehouse (Fig.5.8), and various carved stones (examples of which include a corbel depicting a bear’s head, and a carved coupled capital which was probably part of the original cloister) either lying loose around the grounds or occasionally integrated into more recent buildings, as the case with nearby Paytoe House (RCHME, 1934, 2).

When standing, the church will have consisted of an aisle-less nave (which can, from the remains, be measured as being roughly 114 x 29 feet in area), a transept with two chapels off to the east, and an aisled presbytery, although practically no trace of these latter areas remain. As Fig.5.6 shows, the cloister (roughly 87 square feet) was connected to the south end of the nave, surrounded by the frater to the south, cellarer’s range to the west, and the dorter range on the east (RCHME, 1934, 1-2). Excavations have shown there to have been three successive floor surfaces in the

cloister itself, and a thin stone partition between two rooms of the cellarer's range. Finds of medieval glazed floor tiles prove how the ground was covered in this section of the building. The cellarer's range and frater are now covered by a 17<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse (Herefordshire SMR, No. 3993).

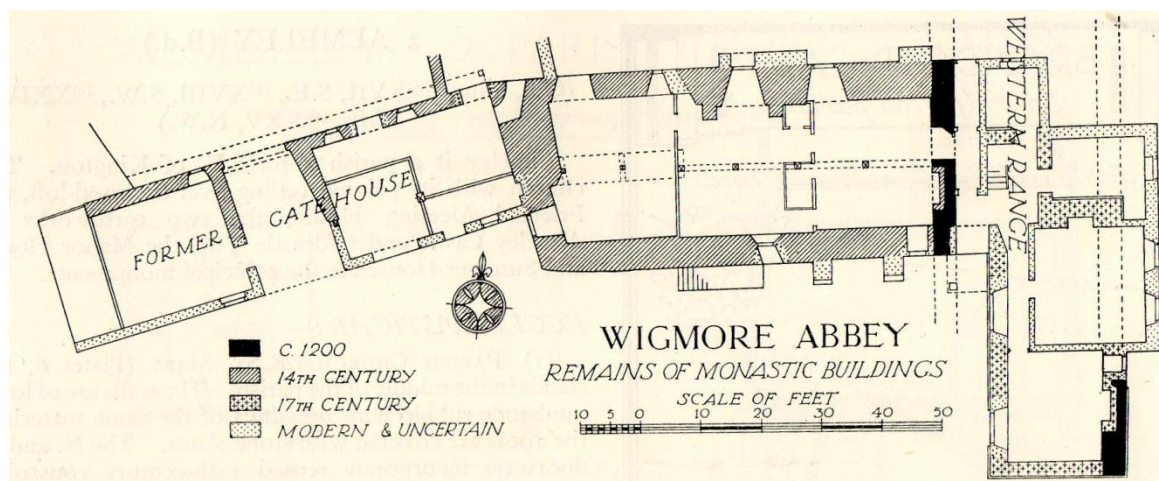


*Fig.5.6: Site plan of Wigmore Abbey, showing the church, adjoining buildings and the range, in addition to the agricultural grange buildings belonging to the site (Source: RCHME, 1934, 2).*



*Fig.5.7: Aerial view of the site of Wigmore Abbey today (as shown in Fig.5.6 above) showing the surviving range buildings which used to be attached to the cloister. Although very little trace of the church is visible, the square area enclosed in the cloister (with the typical crossed paths through the middle) seems to have been preserved and incorporated into the modern garden landscape (Photo: Google Maps, 2012).*

An archaeological excavation in the early 1900s concluded that a major rebuilding and extension of the presbytery took place in the late 13<sup>th</sup> to the early 14<sup>th</sup>-century. This time bracket points to the remodelling taking place during the lordship of either Roger (III) or the first Edmund Mortimer. The former is known to have carried out a rebuilding programme of Wigmore Castle (most of the remaining structures date from this time) (Herefordshire SMR, No. 1652) and so, if the building work at the abbey was his undertaking, the two are likely to have coincided. If it was the work of his son, it may have reflected Edmund's extra affinity to religion and the place of clergy in the church, as he had been a canon of Hereford Cathedral prior to becoming lord.



*Fig.5.8: Plan of the western range (which adjoined the cloister: see Fig.5.6 and 5.7), Abbot's Lodging and gatehouse of Wigmore Abbey (Source: RCHME, 1934, 3).*

Fig.5.8 shows the layout of the monastery's western range attached to the gatehouse, which is one of the best surviving buildings. As the plan shows, there are 12<sup>th</sup>-century sections (and some much more recent additions), but the majority of the structure dates from the 14<sup>th</sup>-century, and it is likely that these parts were built at the time of Edmund's aforementioned large scale reconstruction in 1379. The gatehouse itself is rectangular in layout, covering an area of about 70 feet, and consists of two levels; the lower storey is constructed from stone, whereas the upper level is timber framed (RCHME, 1934, 2). Pevsner (1963, 322) comments on the gatehouse's sturdy, heavy timbers on the top level of the building (on both the outside and inside supporting the roof), which are all 14<sup>th</sup>-century in date. At the midpoint of the building is the stone gateway itself (Fig.5.9) which uses a segmental pointed arch

design (RCHME, 1934, 2). According to Pevsner (1963, 322), the building between the gatehouse and the western range that adjoins the cloister seems to have served as the abbot's lodging. There was a hall and a parlour here, the timber beams of which have been dendrochronologically analysed to give replacement dates of 1482-5, 1682 and 1729. It is suggested that the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>-century wooden beams of the undercroft of this building may have been moved during these periods of alteration, although it is unclear whether any of the timbers are still in their original position (Herefordshire SMR, No. 3988).



*Fig.5.9: Wigmore Abbey gatehouse (Photo: RCHME, 1934, Plate 28).*

Fig.5.8 also shows the position of the grange within the grounds of Wigmore Abbey. A grange is essentially a monastic farm (although Aston gives the more specific archaeological definition as ‘groups of buildings from which an estate was worked’) consisting of the usual collection of buildings that can be found on an agricultural site, such as a farmhouse, barns, animal sheds and often a mill (Aston, 2009, 129). Bond (2004, 130) mentions the full-cruck barn at Wigmore (which, as it is now lost, we only know about from a 19<sup>th</sup>-century sketch) as a particularly fine and large example of such a building, which helps to show the scale and importance of this abbey. The presence of such buildings on the abbey site points to extensive use of the surrounding land owned by the abbey for agricultural purposes. Being situated within a large, flat valley suggests that the area immediately adjacent to the monastic

precinct is likely to have been suited to arable farming, so this was likely to have been the main focus of the abbey's nearby lands. Another factor leading to this conclusion is described by Bond (2004, 45), who points out that arable cultivation requires a great deal of manual labour for a successful crop, and those working on the land will have needed a high degree of supervision. It therefore makes sense to assume that (where suitable) much of the agricultural land closest to the abbey will have been used primarily for arable production.

Fishponds (although serving the additional purpose of displaying high status) were another common feature connected to a monastery's agricultural role, with different types of ponds used for different purposes. Earthworks of a large rectangular enclosure in the grounds of Wigmore Abbey have been interpreted as a fishpond (Fig.5.10), which is thought to have measured roughly 40 x 14 metres in dimension (Herefordshire SMR, No. 3991). Judging by the adjacent location to the monastery, and the relatively small size, this pond may have been the *servatorium*, a type of pond used for holding the fish shortly before their consumption within the abbey (Creighton, 2009, 114-5).





*Fig.5.10: The location of Wigmore Abbey's fishponds, roughly 120m to the north east of the church. Parts of three sides of the retaining bank remain, although the tree cover makes it difficult to see (Photo: Google Maps, 2012).*

Fish played an important role in the monastic diet owing to the strict rules regarding food, and fishponds became a common feature in monastic precincts, granges and demesne estates from the 12<sup>th</sup>-century onwards (Bond, 2004, 197). They are additionally signs of a high status site (they are also commonly seen associated with castles) as freshwater fish were expensive and therefore only frequently consumed by elite figures (Creighton, 2002, 184). The functional uses and status connotations shown by fishponds will be discussed later in the project.

### **5.3.2 - Case Study Site:**

#### **Shobdon Priory.**

The church that currently stands in the village of Shobdon is the third to occupy the site. The first was an Anglo-Saxon chapel dedicated to St Juliana, made from timber. It was, at this time, a chapel of ease to the main parish church at Aymestrey (Pfuell, 1994, 10). By Domesday Shobdon was owned by the Mortimer family, but Hugh (I) Mortimer granted the land to his loyal steward, Oliver



Merlimond, initially to rebuild the earlier religious building on the site. Therefore, although Shobdon was not originally a Mortimer foundation, its establishment by their chief steward firmly puts it in the Mortimer sphere of influence. Merlimond had the chapel rebuilt in stone and rededicated to St John the Evangelist, thus obtaining the higher status of parish church for his religious establishment. His installation of a small community of canons from St Victor's, Paris, came on his return to Shobdon after a visiting that particular abbey during a pilgrimage to St James of Compostela (Pfuell, 1994, 11). The church and accompanying property in Shobdon was given to the canons in around 1140 (Ricketts, 2011, 1-2). Robert de Bethune (bishop of Hereford between 1131 and 1148) is thought to have consecrated the new priory (Pevsner, 1963, 287) and the newly installed canons (who, like in Wigmore Abbey, were of the Victorine order) were given the manor of Ledicot to support them (which supplied corn, pigs, sheep and oxen), and a 'very fine house' near to the church itself. However, within a short time of its dedication Merlimond and Mortimer had a major disagreement which resulted in the steward leaving the service of Hugh, and the land reverting to honour of Wigmore (Pfuell, 194, 11).

The priory church at Shobdon would originally have consisted of just the nave and chancel, with the western tower being a thirteenth or fourteenth-century addition (RCHME, 1934, 179). Due to this church since being replaced by another on the same site, it is difficult to work out the plan of the site, or the phasing of the buildings. It was constructed in the Romanesque style, and will have been a particularly fine example of the decorative work of the Hereford School of Romanesque architecture. Their famous work at the church of St Mary and St David, Kilpeck, gives us an indication of the appearance of the church at Shobdon (Pfuell, 1994, 13). Unfortunately the Norman church was pulled down in 1753, leaving only the tower intact, to make way the third church on the site which still stands today (English Heritage National Monuments Record, No. 108516). However, the elaborately decorated chancel arch and the north and south doorways were rescued, joined up and made into a folly a quarter of a mile to the north of the church (Figs.5.11 & 5.12). Sadly, being so exposed to the elements, these are becoming severely weathered, making it difficult to identify some of the carvings.



*Fig.5.11: the folly consisting of the decorated chancel arch (central section) and the north and south doorways of the Norman church at Shobdon (Photo: author's own).*



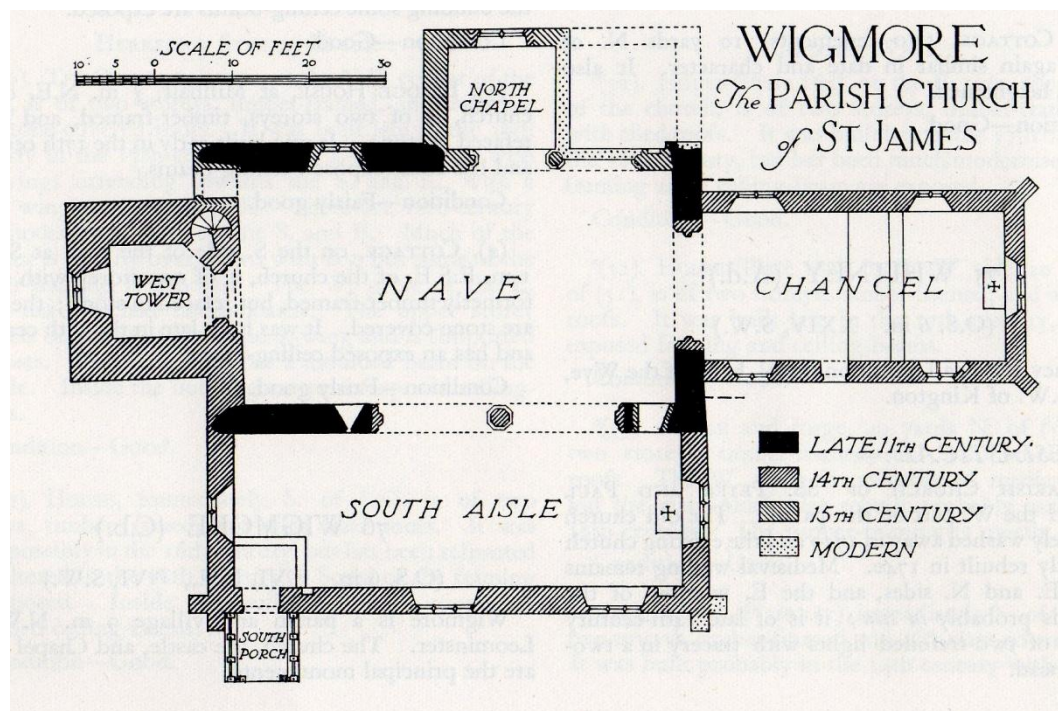
*Fig.5.12: Detail of some of the (unfortunately rather weathered) Romanesque carving on the chancel arch from Shobdon's priory church (Shobdon Arches) (Photo: author's own).*

Between 1131 and 1179, the canons from Shobdon moved location multiple times, but exactly where seems to be difficult to prove as there are numerous different theories; generally agreed sites include Aymestrey, Wigmore village and eventually Wigmore Abbey, but there are additional suggestions of Byton (Beodune) and a return to Shobdon (Pevsner, 1963, 287; Pfeull, 1994, 12). The lands and church of Shobdon itself remained in the possession of the Mortimer's principal religious monument, Wigmore Abbey, until the dissolution in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century (Pfeull, 1994, 12).

### **5.3.3 - Case Study Site:**

#### **St James's Church, Wigmore.**

St James' church, the parish church of Wigmore, lies approximately half a kilometre to the east of the castle (but is, like the abbey, still visible from it), towards the western end of the village (Fig.5.5). The nave, with its excellent example of herringbone masonry exposed in the north wall which helps to date it, was originally built in the latter stages of the 11<sup>th</sup>-century, although much of the building as it stands today is 14<sup>th</sup>-century in origin (Fig.5.13) (RCHME, 1934, 204).



*Fig.5.13: Plan of the parish church of St James, Wigmore, showing the construction dates of different aspects of the building (Source: RCHME, 1934, 204).*

As has been mentioned in the previous section, the church became a secular college in 1106 when Ralph Mortimer installed three prebends there (Ricketts, 2011, 1). The foundation of this sort of religious establishment occurred throughout the medieval period, with early sites (such as Wigmore) frequently being small in size (Creighton, 2002, 130). The number of priests obviously varied according to the scale of the benefaction, but a secular college had the advantage that the canons were able to be more flexible with their lifestyle than those within a monastery. This meant that a patron could benefit from their skills in, for example, areas such as administration in addition to their spiritual services (Pounds, 1990, 233).

In this case, it seems that the college fell out of use with the instigation of Wigmore Abbey in 1179 (Herefordshire SMR, No. 7124), but the building has remained the parish church ever since. As the college was first set up fairly quickly after the Norman Conquest and ceased to function with the new abbey, it can be assumed that it was originally a way for the Mortimers to associate themselves with a religious institution, show their piety and safeguard their souls without a huge degree of expenditure in their new lands. Once the family had grown sufficiently in wealth and status, with less of a tie to their estates in Normandy, they were able to replace the college with a much larger scale foundation.

#### **5.3.4 - Case Study Site:**

##### **Cwmhir Abbey.**

Cwmhir abbey is included in this study because, although it was a Welsh foundation, Roger (II) Mortimer became a major patron of the monastery towards the latter stages of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century (despite his role in the death of one of its founders, Cadwallen) and future generations of the great Marcher family remained benefactors. (Coppack *et al*, 1998, 94).

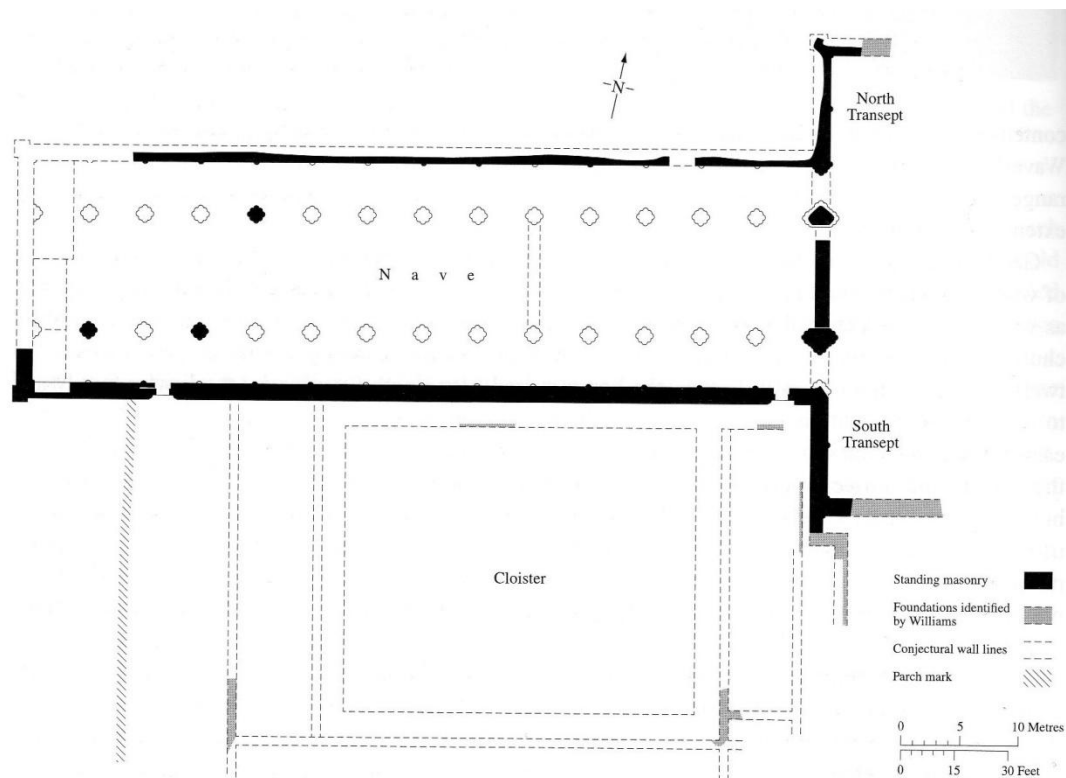
Abbey Cwmhir is situated in the upper valley of the Clywedog Brook, on the western edge of what used to be Maelienydd (now Radnorshire), in an area where the land flattens out to a width of around 150 metres (Radford, 1982, 58-60). Despite standing in such a remote site enclosed by valley sides rising to 450 metres high, the monastery was well connected, having easy access to the east and west, and a routeway leading to the Cistercian house at Strata Florida (Rees *et al*, 2005, 133). The chronicle of Chester Abbey tells us that Cwmhir was founded in 1143 by Maredudd



(son of Madog ap Idwerth), then later refounded (with monks from Whitland, Carmarthenshire) by his brothers Cadwallen and Einion Clud in 1176 (Haslam, 1979, 215). The common connection between Welsh nobility and Cistercian monasteries is well known, but it seems that Cwmhir was the first house of this order to be founded by a Welsh prince. However, the construction came to an abrupt halt just a year after it began owing the reconquering of Maelienydd by the Mortimers. It does not appear that they had any interest in the abbey at this time, so it was not until the area was once again under Welsh control after 1165 that work on the site resumed (Radford, 1982, 58). Cwmhir was re-established as a daughter house of Whitland by Cadwallen ap Madog in 1176 (it should be noted that some scholars consider Cadwallen to be the actual founder at this time, as there is some suspicion about the accuracy of the documents detailing the earlier establishment), but the lands in which the monastery stood would change hands between the English and the Welsh for many years to come. Maelienydd was once again controlled by the English before 1200, when a charter records the confirmation of Cwmhir's possessions by the Mortimers, who then lost it to Llewellyn ap Iowerth until 1240 (Rees *et al*, 2005, 133). In 1199, Cwmhir sent monks to Cymer (Merioneth) to found its own daughter house (Haslam, 1979, 215). Cwmhir's Welsh roots were never forgotten, even though English lords, such as the Mortimers, played such a large part in its history. King John attempted in 1212 to have the abbey (along with Strata Florida) destroyed for its support of the Welsh, although this loyalty would not protect the monastery from serious damage during the Glyndwr revolt (Gray, 2005, 17-8).

Aspects of the original plan of Cwmhir Abbey were learned from small private excavations undertaken in the 1820s and 1890s, with further surveys carried out in 1988 and in the three year period between 1997 and 2000 giving a more detailed analysis of the site (Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust Projects: Abbey Cwmhir). CADW also embarked on emergency conservation work on the site in 1998 (Rees *et al*, 2005, 140). It was discovered that the abbey church itself was never completed; had it been, it would have been the largest church in Wales at the time, with the nave alone measuring 78 x 25 metres in total (Radford, 1982, 70). All that remains of this great fourteen-bay aisled structure are three pier bases of the colonnade and parts of the outer walls of the north and south aisles (Fig.5.14). Sections of the western walls of the north and south transepts (to the east of the nave) are still visible as masonry, and the south wall of the southern transept is marked by a slight bank (Clwyd-Powys

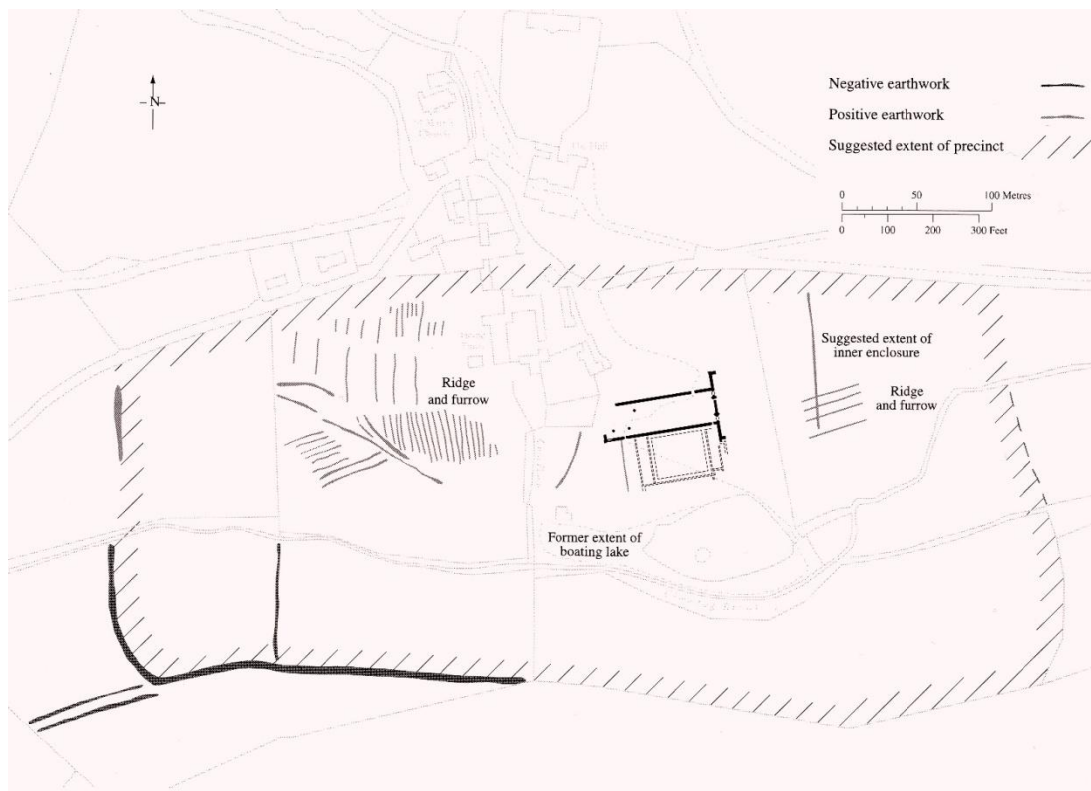
Archaeological Trust Projects: Abbey Cwmhir). However, five of the nave bays were transferred to Llanidloes shortly after the dissolution, so part of the building is preserved (Haslam, 1979, 126). Nothing of the cloister, located to the south of the church, is left above ground. Indeed, the only visible sign that buildings existed there is the mound of the (probable) collapsed chapter house to the south-west. However, the excavations of the 1820s showed that the cloister was surrounded by the abbot's lodging (on the eastern side), refectory (south) and dormitories (west) (Haslam, 1979, 216).



*Fig.5.14: The ground plan of the church and cloister at Cwmhir Abbey, combining three archaeological investigations: Stephen Williams' study of wall footings (1890s), a 1995 study of a parch mark to the west of the cloister, and a survey of the remaining visible remnants of buildings in 2000 (Source: Rees et al, 2005, 136).*

Cwmhir Abbey has a large precinct containing many of the features common for such a large monastery, such as fishponds, enclosures and parkland. However, there seems to have been limited archaeological investigation of these aspects of the monastery at this site. Being a Cistercian site, it is typically remote and secluded, which is a trait made necessary by the rules of the order which involved a 'rejection of

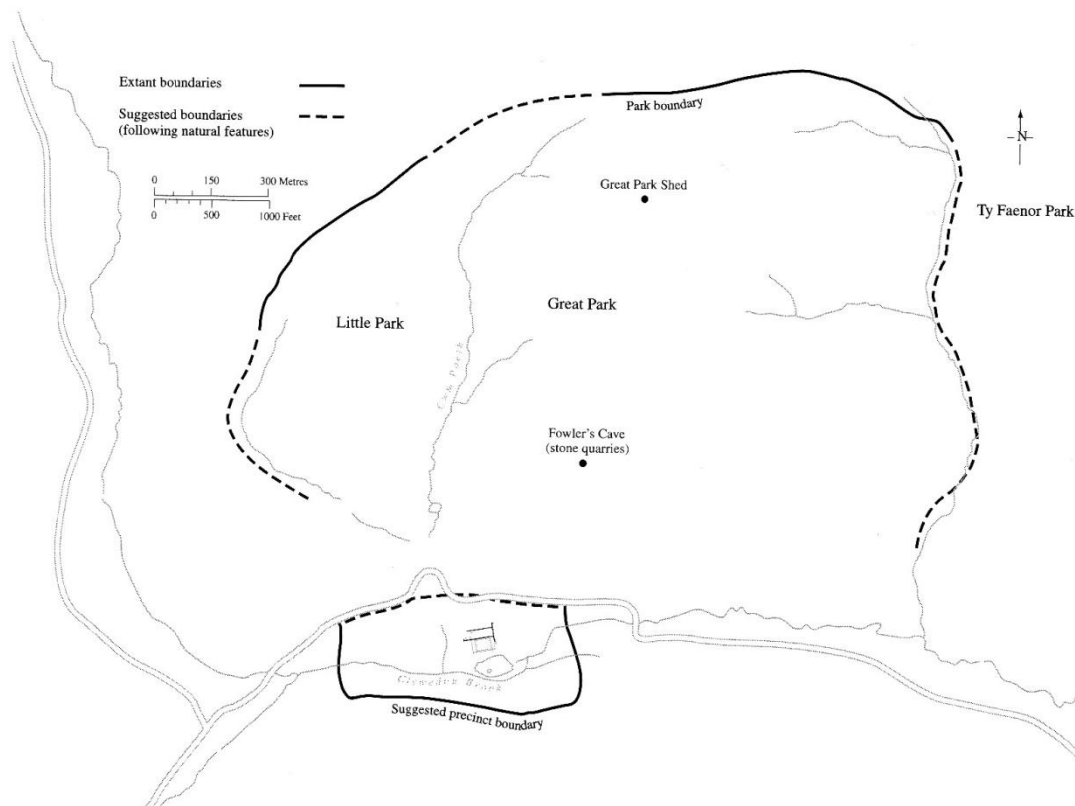
the distractions of the world' (Greene, 1992, 19). As it was so isolated, means of self-sufficiency were necessary. At Cwmhir, from looking at the fields immediately surrounding the abbey, it is possible to work out the probable extent of the site's enclosure. Using the visible earthworks, aerial photographs and the tithe survey, it is thought that the natural features of Clywedog and Cwm Poeth brooks and the natural hilltop to the north, along with a bank that will once have been an enclosure wall, will have enclosed the abbey's 10 acre enclosure (Fig.5.15) (Rees *et al*, 2005, 145). Fig.5.15 also shows the location, to the east and the west of the abbey church, of evidence for open-field strip farming in the form of ridge and furrow earthworks (Bond, 2004, 46), proving that this area of flat land in the precinct was used for the production of arable crops.



*Fig.5.15: The (suggested) precinct of Cwmhir Abbey. Note that the boating lake is a much later feature, and that there is evidence for a possible inner enclosure on the site (Source: Rees et al, 2005, 146).*

The abbey, like Wigmore, possessed fishponds (although the only remaining evidence for this is the remains of a large dam), but these were located several kilometres up the valley from the site of the monastery (they are not the boating lake

shown in Fig.5.15 above). This was probably linked to the limited availability of good agricultural land in the area; the monks used the nearest appropriately marginal land available for their pond rather than taking up a more valuable, better quality plot, which could have been used for other purposes such as cereal cultivation, to construct the feature (Rees *et al*, 2005, 147). Aston (2009, 24-28) points out a number of requirements regarding the surrounding area for a monastery, including a good water supply (for drinking and for draining and cleaning) such as rivers or streams, land for food production, and a good supply of timber and stone as building materials, which was often sourced from the monastery's own estates. Cwmhir had all of these attributes, being located adjacent to two brooks and a wooded valley side, and having its own quarry within the area of parkland to the north of the site known as Fowler's Cave (Fig.5.16), from which the majority of the stone used in the construction of the abbey was sourced (Rees *et al*, 2005, 147).



*Fig.5.16: the location of the abbey precinct within the suggested park boundaries belonging to the monastery and enclosed by Mortimer. The location of the quarry from which the construction stone was sourced is also marked (Source: Rees et al, 2005, 148).*



Fig.5.16 also shows the Little and Great Parks above the abbey, which supposedly overlie the position of the wooded area that Roger (II) Mortimer enclosed (with the permission of the abbot, Philip) in 1241 for hunting purposes (Rees *et al*, 2005, 147). There is a possibility that this wooded area owned by the monastery could also have been used for farming pigs for consumption by the abbey's occupants (it is not thought that the meat was often sold on), as they were most frequently seen on sites with woodland manors where the animals could be put out to graze (Bond, 2004, 67). Pigs, along with oxen, cattle and horses, were kept in the wooded parkland at the Welsh Cistercian site at Strata Florida (Austin, 2007, 16), showing the wide range of agricultural practices that took place in an abbey's parkland, and which can also be expected have taken place at Cwmhir. Another comparison to make which shows the range of activities taking place in a monastic park is Fountains Abbey (Yorkshire), where the extensive adjacent park (here located to the south and the west of the abbey precinct) contained fishponds, a rabbit warren and a horse stud, as well as providing the monastic complex with water and a substantial timber supply (Moorhouse, 2007, 102). Beyond just providing a simple source of meat for the abbey, the creation of this parkland demonstrates the influence over the foundation held by the patrons, as the monks themselves (as was mentioned in the Wigmore Abbey case study) were not permitted to hunt. It is likely therefore that the land would have been enclosed solely for the use of the Mortimer family and their guests to hunt, in addition to the benefits that the park could provide with regard to meat production.

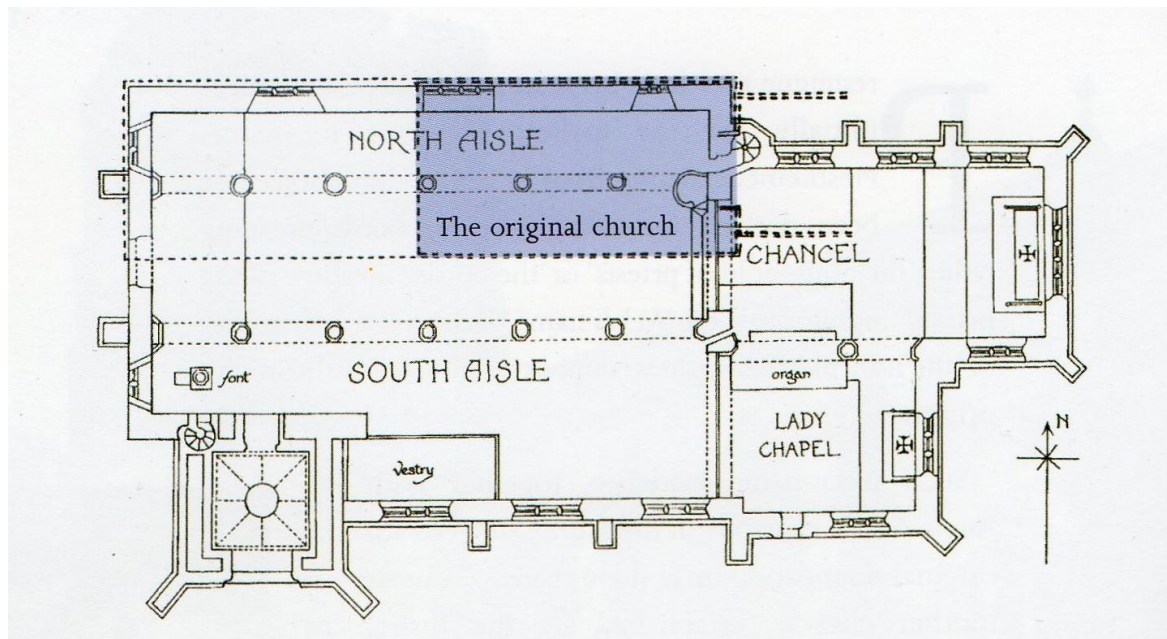
Land granted to the abbey by both English and Welsh patrons provided it with the means for a mixed agricultural economy. After the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century, the Cistercians were highly profitable in the production of meat, wool and hides for the export market, despite the fact that the consumption of meat and trading in other animal produce was theoretically not allowed within this order (Bond, 2004, 59). For example, the Cistercian monastery of Abbey Dore in the southern march was highly profitable as a result of the wool trade, and possessed nearly 3000 sheep towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century (Rowley, 1986, 123). Given the time we are looking at for this case study, and the limits of the landscape in terms of what agricultural activities it could support, it is highly likely that Cwmhir will also have participated in this commercial activity. Suitable grazing land in the vicinity of the abbey site included property in Cefnlllys, Llanbadarn Fynydd and Llaithddu (amongst others), whereas sites further afield in the Lugg and Wye valleys provided land more suited to arable

cultivation. Golon (the monastery's home manor) was the most economically successful site that Cwmhir owned, which produced mainly sheep and oats (Rees *et al.*, 2005, 134). Oats are known to have been an especially important crop for monasteries located in more remote, marginal areas such as Cwmhir or Strata Florida owing to the cold, wet climate which would not be suited to many other types of cereal production (Bond, 2004, 48).

### **5.3.5 - Case Study Site:**

#### **Church of St Andrew, Presteigne.**

St Andrew's, in the Radnorshire town of Presteigne, was originally a pre-Conquest church measuring approximately just 12 x 6 metres, the site of which now occupies part of the north aisle of the present church (Fig.5.17) although the only visible remains of this are sections of the lower (exterior) north wall (Parker, 2001, 2). From a walk around the outside of the building it is possible to see from the sections of different stonework and architectural styles that it comprises that the church has had a number of rebuilding episodes in its history. Several of these occurred during the medieval period; the Saxon church was followed by a slightly extended early Norman building including a narrow nave, chancel arch, western door and two windows (now blocked) (Radnorshire Churches Survey, CPAT). An apparently aborted reconstruction took place at the start of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century (evidenced by the two circular western piers of the north arcade), and further rebuilding work in the 14<sup>th</sup>-century saw the old nave becoming an aisle of the new larger construction before the Lady Chapel was extended and the chancel remodelled c.1450 (Haslam, 1979, 268). The church was apparently twice sacked by the Welsh, by Llewelyn the Great in 1213 and by Owain Glyndwr in 1402, but these episodes do not seem to have had a dramatic lasting impact on the building (Parker, 2001, 3).



*Fig.5.17: Plan of Presteigne Church, showing the location of the original pre-Conquest structure (Plan: Parker, 2001, 2).*

The known connections of the church to the Mortimer family date from the 13<sup>th</sup>-century. A recess in the north wall contains a decorated coffin lid (dated to c.1240, see Fig.5.18) which is thought to be the resting place of a member of the Mortimer family (Parker, 2001, 6). Presumably this is the tapered lid with the large carving of a foliate cross that Haslam describes (1979, 268). We know that the most influential members of the Mortimer family were buried at Wigmore Abbey, so it is likely therefore that this was a slightly lower ranked relation. Indeed, a branch of the Mortimer family (also the lords of Richard's Castle on the Herefordshire-Shropshire border) was connected to nearby Stapleton Castle in the 13<sup>th</sup>-century (Shoesmith, 2009, 258) so it is most likely to have been a figure from this section of the family who was buried here.



*Fig.5.18: The decorated coffin lid in the north wall of the church, thought to belong to a member of the Mortimer family (Photo: Dilys Hollinghurst, 2012).*

Another Mortimer (it is unclear which) seems to have granted funds for the construction of the eastern window of the chancel. A stone above the window is inscribed with the letters 'M.P.L' and the date 1244 (Fig.5.19). This is thought to stand for '*Mortimerus Pasuit Libeus*', meaning 'this part of the church Mortimer had the pleasure to erect' (Radnorshire Churches Survey, CPAT). To add to this is the carving of the Mortimer family coat of arms on a buttress of the south wall (Fig.5.20) (Haslam, 1979, 268). The connections to the Mortimers described here are perhaps unsurprising owing to the fact that the church was owned by the canons of Wigmore Abbey from the 13<sup>th</sup>-century until the reformation, and the monastery was obviously well connected to St Andrew's as it was responsible for the building of the church's chancel (Radnorshire Churches Survey, CPAT). It is likely that whichever Mortimer it was that constructed the east window did so at the time his abbey built this new part of the church.





*Fig.5.19: The inscription above the east window of Presteigne Church detailing Mortimer's funding for this section of the building (Photo: Dilys Hollinghurst, 2012).*



*Fig.5.20: The Mortimer coat of arms carved into a buttress of the southern wall of Presteigne Church (Photo: Dilys Hollinghurst, 2012).*

## **Chapter 6 - Case Study 2:**

### **The Religious Connections of the Montgomerys of Shrewsbury.**

#### **6.1 - Brief Overview of the Montgomery family.**

The Montgomery family, although only at the height of their wealth and influence in England for a relatively short period of time from the Conquest until the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century, had a huge impact in the Anglo-Welsh border area as the Earls of Shrewsbury. Typically for the Norman aristocracy in the Marches, they also had great ambitions in Wales, making advances far across the border in the early years after the Conquest. This section will look at the four major characters of the Montgomery family (Roger, Hugh, Robert and Arnulf) from the Conquest until their downfall in 1102. Roger was the first to assume the title of Earl of Shrewsbury and was followed by his second son Hugh. Succeeding his father in 1094, Hugh had a short time in power, dying just four years later during a raid on Anglesey with the Earl of Chester in an unexpected conflict with Magnus Barefoot, King of Norway (Davies, 2000, 10). His older brother Robert had already inherited Roger's landed property in Normandy, and upon Hugh's death became Earl of Shrewsbury. Again, he had a short time holding that honour, being exiled and deprived of his earldom for his part in a rebellion in 1102 (Walker, 1990, 34). Arnulf, another of Roger's sons, was a more important figure in Wales than the March, being established as lord of Pembroke in 1093 (Mason, 1962, 17), but is included here due to his connections with some of the events undertaken by his family on the Anglo-Welsh border.

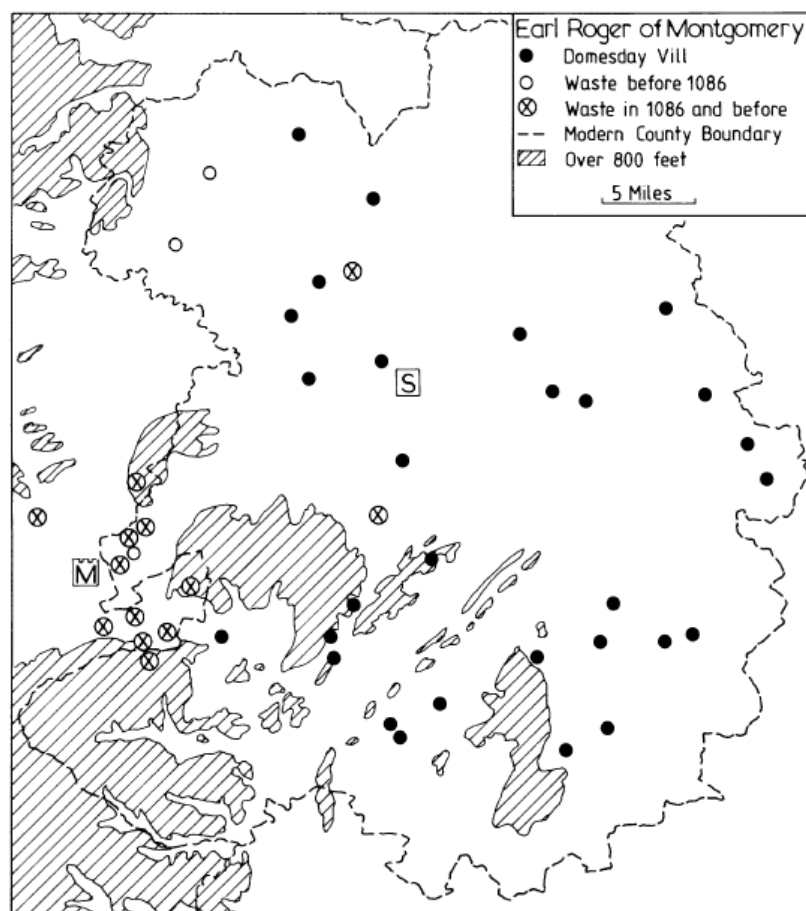
Roger de Montgomery was already a highly influential figure in the Norman aristocracy at the time of the Conquest. During the time Duke William spent in England in 1066, his dukedom of Normandy was left in the hands of his friend Roger, acting as regent (Baker, 2010, 105). According to Orderic Vitalis, Roger first went to England in 1068 accompanying the king, who had been settling matters to do with the governing of Normandy in his absence, when he returned to his newly conquered kingdom to deal with disquiet that had surfaced there (*Orderic Vitalis*, 14). Having already been granted lands at Chichester and Arundel, Roger was installed as the first Earl of Shrewsbury, and was thus given authority over the county town and the royal demesne in the county of Shropshire. Added to these benefits, the remainder of the

land in the earldom was held of the earl himself rather than the king (Davies, 2000, 28).

Roger de Montgomery was, like William fitzOsbern in Herefordshire, a highly trusted follower of William I, and it was for this reason that he, just like the Earl of Hereford, was given the task of controlling the troublesome border region between England and Wales. The area around Shrewsbury seems to have been particularly contested and unsettled around the time of the Conquest: in 1069 the town itself was the focus of an attack by Eadric the Wild in coalition with the Welsh princes Bleddyn and Rhiwallen (Darby, 1986, 267). To counter such events, Roger de Montgomery began implementing Norman control by reorganising the estates which fell within the lands of the earldom into ‘compact tenurial blocks’, and granting them to personal followers (mostly from Normandy) who would be loyal to him and assist with the consolidation and growth of his lands on the border (Davies, 2000, 30). Along with these changes to the land tenure in his wider earldom, Roger also had an impact on the topography of Shrewsbury itself. To create space for his castle, he had 51 properties destroyed, with another 43 taken over for the use of French burgesses (Darby, 1986, 267-8). The exact location of this borough is unclear, but we can assume that it was situated in the immediate vicinity of the baronial castle due to the added security that being surrounded by his own loyal followers would provide Roger. He also rearranged the structure of a great deal of land in Sussex; here and in Shropshire, the land possessions of approximately 150 Englishmen were taken over and repossessed by around 60 of the new Earl’s French followers (Mason, 1962, 7). This ownership from far fewer tenants, all of whom could be trusted as fellow Normans, is likely to have ensured the Earl a high level of control in these areas.

Unlike the Mortimer family, who in the previous case study were described as having concentrated their estates around a central *caput*, the Montgomery family lands were scattered across several English counties including Cambridgeshire, Middlesex and Wiltshire, in addition to his better known properties in Arundel and Shropshire (Mason, 1962, 7). Fig.6.1 illustrates the large extent of Earl Roger’s land around his main seat at Shrewsbury at the time of Domesday. Roger ensured a high degree of control in the area of Shropshire’s border with Wales by dividing the land in the west of the county between three trusted tenants, Warin, Corbet and de Say (Mason, 1962, 8). Roger’s sons also held land in England and Normandy while he was the Earl of Shrewsbury. His third son Robert (known as Robert de Poitevin after

marrying the heiress to the Count of le Marche) owned land in various English counties, including most of modern day Lancashire, although it seems that he was in the process of having some of these confiscated at the time of Domesday (he later recovered them along with additional lands; see Lewis, 1989). Roger's oldest son Robert had taken over his mother (Roger's first wife) Mabel's lands after her murder, and Hugh (who succeeded to his father's lands and title in England) already owned the manor of Worfield (Staffordshire) before his inheritance (Mason, 1962, 13-14). As a younger son, and so not the recipient of either his father's earldom in England or his land in Normandy, Arnulf seemed quite fortunate to have been granted the lordships of Pembroke and Holderness (Yorkshire), but the characteristic ambitions of the family are well demonstrated by him; he married the daughter of King Muircertach in an attempt to begin a power base and secure a kingdom in Ireland (Davies, 2000, 83).



*Fig.6.1: Map showing the land holdings of Roger de Montgomery within the county of Shropshire at the time of Domesday. Shrewsbury is marked by an S, and the castle at Montgomery (M), just over the border, is also shown (Map: Darby, 1989, 268).*



The ambitious family of the Earls of Shrewsbury were like a number of Norman families who used Wales for young men, most frequently younger sons, to prove themselves militarily. Earl Roger's son Hugh was very young when he was sent on an excursion into Ceredigion in 1074, and Arnulf was given the task of bringing and consolidating Norman power in the area around Pembroke (Davies, 2000, 85). Perhaps unusually for a Norman baron on the Welsh border, we only have proof of one campaign led by Earl Roger himself, in 1093, shortly before his death (Mason, 1962, 12). Roger and Arnulf entered Dyfed in 1093-4 and constructed a small castle at Aberteifi (Cardigan), which was not able to withstand the revolt which occurred in the area in 1093 (Davies, 2000, 39). A carefully sited castle to act as a strategic and administrative centre was also constructed at Pembroke at the time of this expedition (Walker, 1990, 25) from which Arnulf assumed control of the region. The strength of this siting lay in its position on a natural promontory surrounded by the Pembroke River and its low cliffs descending to the water, and its position in a corner of the town's defences (Pettifer, 2000, 169).

Despite their obvious interest in west-Wales, it appears that the first Earl of Shrewsbury and his influential tenants did not so soon after the conquest strive to achieve overall control far into Wales, instead concentrating on gaining dominance over long sections of the frontier between England and Wales (Walker, 1990, 24). Roger sited a castle, known as Hen Domen, at Montgomery (named after his family seat in Normandy, Montgomeri) between Offa's Dyke and the River Severn as a base from which to initiate advances into Wales. Naming Montgomery after his hometown, Roger was not only imposing Norman power, but making sure that his family name would be prominent in Wales at a time when there were a number of different Norman lords attempting to accomplish their own dominant ambitions in the country (Liebermann, 2010, 109). The castle here was a vital location for communications into mid Wales, and it was from here that regions such as Arwystli, Ceri and Cydwain were vulnerable and able to be overrun (Walker, 1990, 24). From this base at Montgomery, a line of eight further mottes were constructed up the valley from Montgomery to Llandinam, providing the Normans with some degree of control over the Welsh land adjacent to the border (Davies, 2000, 30). But with the family's ruin in 1102, the impetus for Norman expansion into mid-Wales was temporarily stopped, as they had been the main agents behind the territorial conquests in Shropshire's border area (Liebermann, 2010, 112).

During their short time in power, the Montgomerys had quite a varied relationship with their monarch. Being so much in favour with William I, Earl Roger spent a fair amount of time at the royal court. His successor Hugh, however, seems to have spent comparatively little time there, spending the majority of his short stretch as Earl of Shrewsbury in Wales (Mason, 1962, 17). Despite the family having such close connections to William I before the Conquest, they were involved with several plots to overthrow his successors. In 1088 Roger and his sons took part in a revolt to overthrow William Rufus, and replace him with Duke Robert of Normandy (William I's elder son). A group of the Duke's followers seized Rochester castle, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle mentions that three sons of Earl Roger of Shrewsbury (assumed to be his three oldest, Robert, Hugh and Roger) were involved (Lewis, 1989, 572-3). Hugh was also involved in the plot of 1094 against William II, which planned to install Stephen of Champagne in his place. Hugh de Montgomery escaped any severe reprimand, keeping his title and land. His brother Arnulf was even granted the lands in Lincolnshire and Holderness that had belonged to Stephen of Champagne's father, Odo (Mason, 1962, 17). The family's luck ran out in 1102, however, when Robert, Arnulf and Roger were involved in a revolt against the new king, Henry I. Upon Henry's accession, Earl Robert began strengthening his castles at Shrewsbury, Arundel, Bridgnorth and Tickhill, openly rebelling in 1102 with the help of his brother, along with Welsh and Irish allies (Maund, 1991, 170). The Montgomery brothers were exiled and forfeited all their lands in England and Wales as a result (Davies, 2000, 35).

Despite the family only being prominent in England for two generations, they left an enduring legacy. Their extensive religious patronage will be discussed in the next section, and by 1094, the year of Roger's death, they had contributed to laying the foundations for a steady Norman expansion into Wales (Davies, 2000, 30). During Roger's lifetime, the towns under his authority thrived. For example, as early as 1086 Arundel had become a highly important port town, Chichester had greatly increased in size, and the earl, along with the aforementioned changes to Shrewsbury itself, had created a new borough (Quatford) near Bridgnorth in Shropshire (Mason, 1962, 11). Their changes to the tenurial arrangements in their earldom have already been alluded to, and these remained long after the family's ruin. With the forfeit of the Montgomery lands in 1102, Henry I did not alter Roger's land organisation, keeping the tenurial structure as the compact lordships were useful as rewarding grants to his

loyal followers (Liebermann, 2010, 112). He simply adjusted Shropshire to fit into the county structure of the rest of England, and installed Richard de Belmeis (who would later become bishop of London) as sheriff (Davies, 2000, 40) rather than giving an individual the overarching authority that the earls had enjoyed.

## **6.2 - Religious Patronage of the Montgomery Family.**

The religious patronage of the Montgomery family was extensive and varied despite their downfall occurring early in the period of Norman rule. The majority of significant benefactions come from Roger, the first Earl of Shrewsbury, which demonstrates his wealth and piety, although it is also a reflection of his far longer time in a position of authority than his sons and successors Hugh and Robert. As we see with many influential members of the Norman barony, members of the Montgomery family founded monasteries, granted estates to establishments on both sides of the channel, entered the church themselves (for example, as a monk or a canon) and used monasteries as mausoleums for the family. We have a particularly useful near-contemporary source for the religious involvement of the Montgomery family in Orderic Vitalis' *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*. Orderic's father was a priest of Earl Roger in Shrewsbury, so the work gives some interesting and detailed insights into his relationship with the church during his life in France and England.

According to Orderic, Roger de Montgomery did not always enjoy harmonious relationship with religious institutions, seemingly whilst married to his first wife Mabel who was apparently heavily opposed to the family who founded the Abbey of St Evroult in Normandy. Orderic comments that, at the instigation of his wife, Roger was a 'very troublesome neighbour' to this abbey, yet after her murder he had a change of heart and 'prudently endeavoured to efface his former errors, by his subsequent amendment of life'. St Evroult's became the recipient of grants and tithes from Roger's English and Norman estates, money for candles to be continuously kept burning in the church, and rights of pasture in all his forests (see *Orderic Vitalis* for the full charter). Unusually, we are given a specific reason (recorded in the charter itself) for the benefaction: Roger declared that the gifts were for the 'repose of my own soul and those of my ancestors' (*Orderic Vitalis*, 93-7). These two motives occur frequently in foundation charters for religious houses. Research into the reasons behind monastic foundations by Anglo-Norman lords has been carried out by Cownie

(1998, 155), who, from a study of 185 charters, found that the concern for the soul of the individual himself was by far the most common reason stipulated for foundations by male donors (with 93 instances occurring from the charters studied), and concern for the benefactor's ancestors was again fairly frequent (with 41 examples).

Roger de Montgomery's major foundations within his earldom of Shrewsbury include the Benedictine abbey in the county town itself, and the Cluniac priory at Much Wenlock. This site was an early example of the Cluniac order in England, being founded only a few years later than the first of the priories to be built in England at Lewes (Sussex) in 1077 (Knowles & Hadcock, 1971, 96). Prior to the Conquest, Roger de Montgomery had been a major benefactor to the Abbey of Cluny (Burgundy), to which all Cluniac monasteries were dependant within this strict section of the Benedictine order (Morley, 1985, 2). Roger's involvement in the introduction of this order in England, and the foundation of an abbey which was so unusual at such an early stage, could be seen as indicative of his highly wealthy and influential status. Roger had also founded three monasteries in France at Séez, Almenèches and Troarn, which he granted land and dependant priories from his English estates in Sussex (Mason, 1962, 9). The examples in Shropshire show that Earl Roger concentrated his larger religious foundations near to his main power base in Shrewsbury (perhaps using them as conspicuous displays of status and wealth in his new earldom) but also maintained support to his earlier foundations in his native Normandy by gifting them some of his new found territory. This is also a good example of a lord granting a monastery distant land that would perhaps be difficult to oversee owing to its location, thus achieving spiritual gains at the same time as simplifying his administrative workload (Greene, 1992, 133).

At this point it is worth commenting further on the Montgomery foundations in France. The family had extensive holdings in the area of the River Dives (in the Calvados region of Normandy), on the course of which stood Roger's abbey of St Martin at Troarn (Fig.6.2). His other foundations, at Séez and Almenèches, are however located much further south, which is likely to be because his marriage to Mabel de Belleme presented him with influence over much of her family's extensive land holdings in southern Normandy (Potts, 1997, 123). St Martin de Séez, Roger's Benedictine foundation of 1060, was an urban site but situated away from the main centre of the town in order to afford the community an extent of separation (Hicks, 2007, 18). This is mirrored by Shrewsbury Abbey, which was located across the river

Severn from the main focus of the town (Fig.6.3). Almenèches was a pre-existing Benedictine nunnery first founded in the 6<sup>th</sup>-century, but refounded by Roger in 1063-3 (Hicks, 2007, 193). It was this nunnery that Emma, the daughter of Roger and Mabel, became first a nun then an abbess (*Orderic Vitalis*, 195). This site is dissimilar to the other Montgomery sites (on both sides of the channel) in that it was located in a rural, isolated setting rather than being attached to a settlement, but this is explained by the fact that it was typical for Norman nunneries to be situated in rural locations at this time (Hicks, 2007, 19).

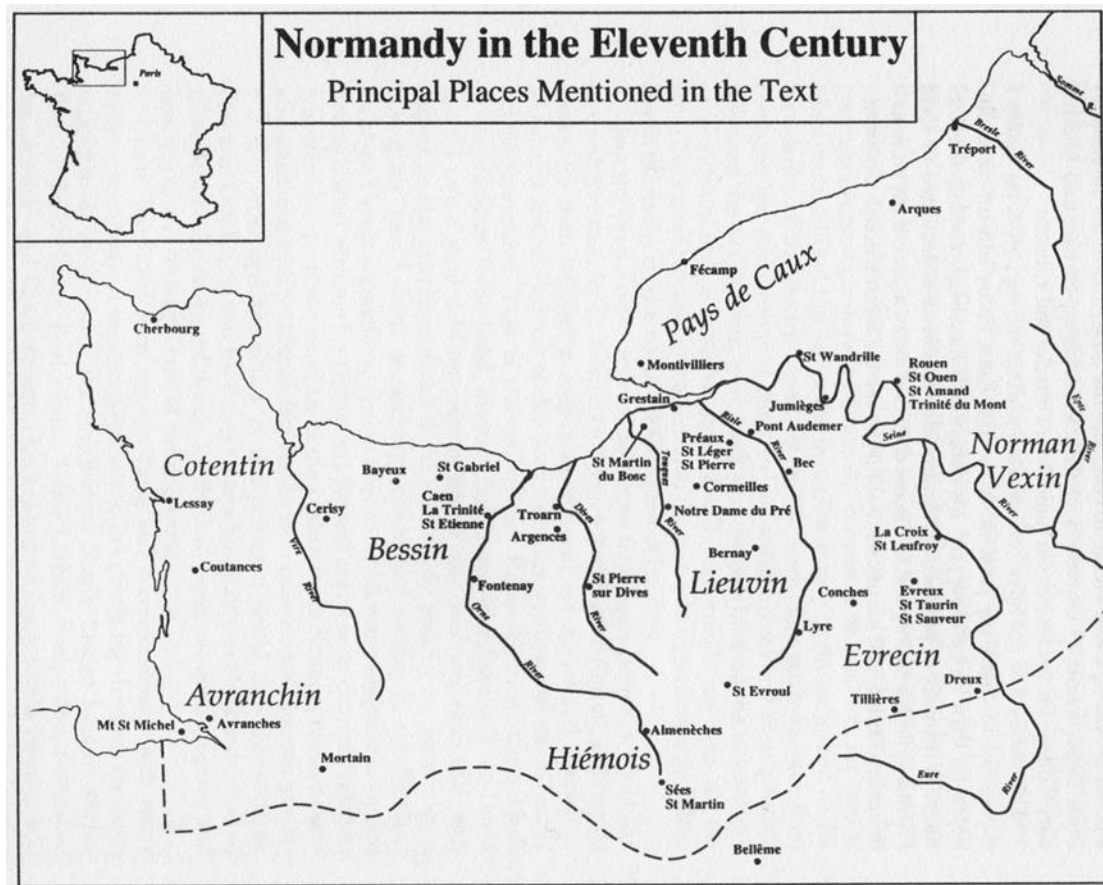
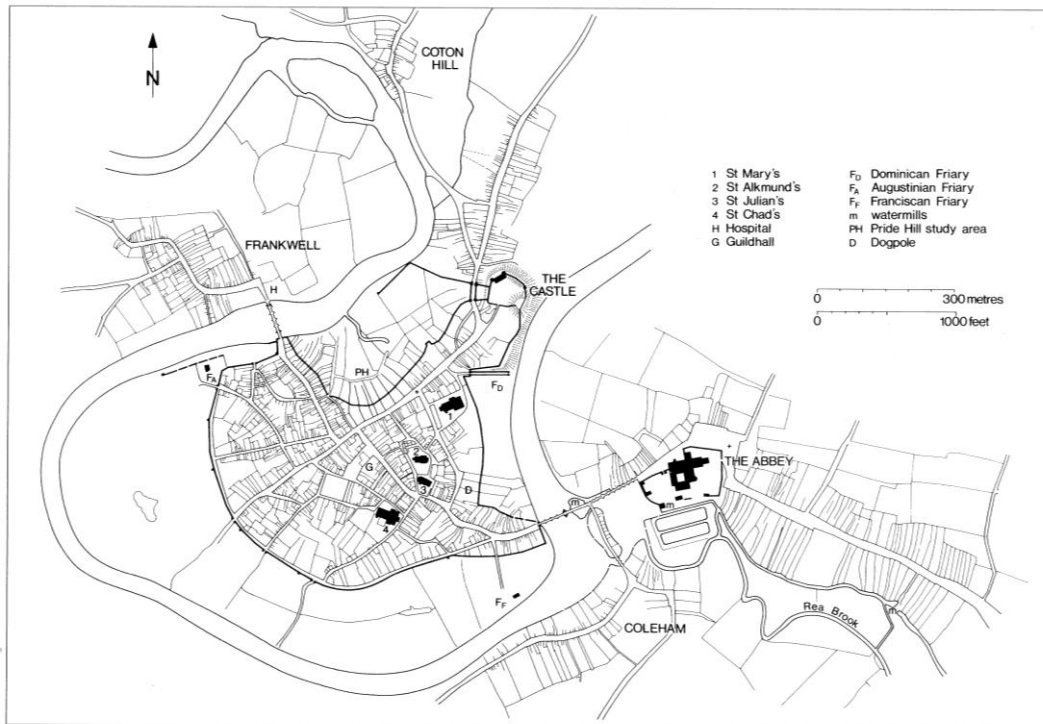


Fig.6.2: Map showing the religious houses in Normandy in the 11<sup>th</sup>-century. The three Montgomery sites at Troarn, Almenèches and Sées (spelled Sées here) are shown; note their locations in both the north and south regions of central Normandy, demonstrating the range of the family's influence (Map: Potts, 2007, xii).



*Fig.6.3: The historic town plan (based on the 1883 First edition Ordnance Survey) showing the position of the town almost entirely enclosed by the river Severn, and Abbey Foregate's location on the opposite bank, separating it from the main settlement (Map: Baker, 2010, 7).*

Roger's sons were also benefactors of religious houses, but it seems that they (perhaps due to their lesser wealth and established status in England) conformed more to the idea that the early generations of Normans tended not to expend too much on establishments in their newly conquered lands (unlike their father's foundations in Shropshire), concentrating instead on gifts to French monasteries (Aston, 2009, 75). Arnulf and Hugh both supported the abbey of La Sauve-Majeure in the Bordelais, which was an unusual and largely unexplained choice due to its distance and the strong familial connections to their father's own foundations (although its founder Gerald apparently had an extensive Norman following). Hugh, as the Earl of Shrewsbury (meaning that we can date his gift to his four years in this position between 1094-8), 'subjected the house of canons' from the collegiate church at Quatford to La Sauve-Majeure, while Arnulf granted the churches and tithes of two of his Lincolnshire manors (Mason, 1962, 19). Arnulf also founded and gave the Priory of St Nicholas at Pembroke to his father's monastery at Séez in 1098, along with the church that then existed within his castle at Pembroke (Knowles & Hadcock, 1971,

73). Earl Roger's third son Roger de Poitevin also granted churches, tithes and manors from his English lands to Saint-Sauveur, Charroux, in (approximately) 1091 (Lewis, 1989, 576).

Earl Roger's major foundations at Shrewsbury and Much Wenlock were located within very different landscapes. Cluniac priories such as Wenlock were generally situated in rural areas, away from large settlements (although often linked to smaller boroughs) (Knowles, 2004, 280). By contrast, Shrewsbury Abbey was built in a typically urban area in the eastern suburb of the town on the banks of the river and by the main approach road (Baker, 2010, 112). As the castle was constructed just across the river on the edge of the town, any visitors approaching Shrewsbury using this road will have been confronted with an imposing view of both establishments. A visit to Shrewsbury castle confirms that the Earl will have been able to see his new foundation from the walls of his residence a short distance away. His new foundation being situated so close to his castle will have afforded him practical advantages, for example the proximity of monks who were learned in legal and financial administration, in addition to spiritual benefits and social prestige (Creighton, 2002, 128). Roger is also known to have possessed a chapel dedicated to St Michael within his castle at Shrewsbury (Mason, 1962, 10). At a time when religion played such a huge role in life, many lords felt the need for a private chapel at their place of residence at this time so that prayers could be said every day on his behalf (Pounds, 1990, 224).

It was not only gifts of land and dependant priories that a Norman lord frequently bequeathed to a monastery that he supported. Other valuable assets such as mills, as were granted to Shrewsbury Abbey by Roger de Montgomery, were often included in grants. Being a Benedictine site, it can be expected to own mills from a very early stage in the abbey's history as it was one of the resources required within the monastic enclosure for this religious order, and it was common practice for further installations to be built or obtained for the generation of extra income through milling tolls, or multure (Bond, 2004, 312). Indeed, the abbey at Shrewsbury is known to have owned three mills in the Foregate area (likely to have been aspects of the original grant) which, because of the monopoly they were able to achieve on the expanding population of the city, were amongst the most lucrative in the country (Baker, 2010, 112).

Like many founders and patrons of monasteries, the Montgomery family used the religious establishments that they were attached to for their own means. Earl Roger entered Shrewsbury Abbey as a monk in his old age, and upon his death shortly afterwards he was buried between the two altars in the abbey church itself (Baker, 2010, 112). According to Orderic Vitalis (203), Hugh's body was brought back from Anglesey in 1098 to be buried in the abbey cloister. However, owing to the exile of the remainder of the family in 1102, these were the only two major figures of the first earls of Shrewsbury to be buried there. Other members of the family also entered the church, with Roger's daughter Emma becoming the abbess of the nunnery at Almenèches (one of Roger's French foundations), and his son Everard a royal chaplain to William II and Henry I (*Orderic Vitalis*, 195).

### **6.3 - Case studies of sites patronised by the Montgomery family.**

This section will look closely at the religious foundations of the Montgomery family in the area of the Welsh Marches, including Shrewsbury Abbey, Much Wenlock Priory, and Quatford church (later moved to Bridgnorth). Unlike the previously discussed Mortimer family, the Earls of Shrewsbury were mainly concerned with founding new religious institutions rather than granting gifts in the area. The reasons for this will be considered in more detail later, but it is likely that this concentration of monastic foundations in fairly close proximity to each other formed part of a demonstration of the Earl's authority aimed not only at the existing population and the Welsh, but at other elite figures who may have been challengers for Montgomery's lands and titles. Demonstrations of power such as this will have been an important tool for the consolidation of control in the disputed border area. We have already seen in the previous section however that the family were major supporters of several monasteries in Normandy, and, as early generations of Normans in England, these monasteries are likely to have been where their allegiances lay as far as the patronage of existing sites is concerned. The other major difference between this study and the last is that here we are only dealing with the benefactions of three major figures in a relatively short space of time, rather than numerous generations of a family.



### **6.3.1 - Case Study Site:**

#### **Shrewsbury Abbey.**

Shrewsbury Abbey was founded by Earl Roger de Montgomery in the early 1080s to house two Benedictine monks (likely to have been chosen for their architectural skills) from the aforementioned monastery he had founded at Séez prior to the Conquest of England (Owen & Blakeway, 1825, 7). Orderic Vitalis gives a valuable insight into the events surrounding its foundation, providing an unusually detailed account, considering its early Norman date, of a religious foundation's beginnings. Orderic tells that his father Odelirius of Orleans, the earl's priest (and the owner of the original timber chapel that stood on the site prior to the Norman building), 'took convenient opportunities of exhorting him to erect the monastery', and that Roger, having been persuaded, went to the church with a number of counsellors and officers to witness his promise to transform it into an abbey. He laid his gauntlets upon the altar and bequeathed the entire suburb outside the eastern gate of Shrewsbury (*Orderic Vitalis*, 198-200). Earl Roger's foundation and early grants are also mentioned in another contemporary source; Domesday relays that:

"In Shrewsbury city Earl Roger is building an abbey and has given to it the minster of St Peter, where there was a parish church of the city; and [has given] to the monks as much [in dues] from his burgesses and mills as renders £12" (*Domesday*, 689).

Building work was advanced enough for monastic life to begin at the abbey in 1087 (the year that the first abbot was installed) and we know that the church was completed sufficiently for Earl Roger's burial (Fig.6.4) within it in 1094 (Baker, 2010, 112).

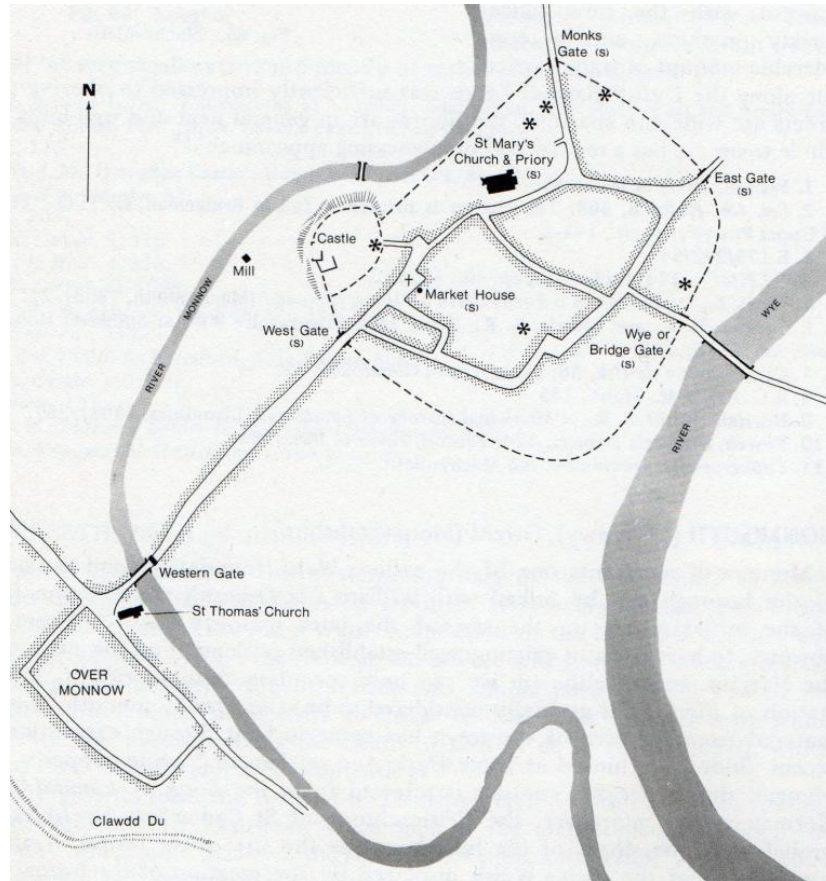


*Fig.6.4: Stone effigy, thought to be that of Roger de Montgomery, in Shrewsbury Abbey. It is now located in the southern side of the church rather than Roger's original burial place between the two altars (Photo: Tim Hollinghurst, 2012).*



*Fig.6.5: The view of the abbey from Shrewsbury castle. Having a castle and a monastery, particularly one which the lord of that castle was associated with, situated at such close quarters was a sign of highly elevated status, and a practice undertaken by many medieval figures of authority able to afford it (Creighton, 2002, 128). The abbey precinct will have extended even closer to the castle than shown here, but unfortunately this has since been destroyed by subsequent building work (Photo: Tim Hollinghurst, April 2012).*

Shrewsbury Abbey, being such an early Norman foundation in England, is one of the exceptions to the general trend for Norman lords to concentrate their attentions on their French establishments, but it is similar to several other early sites (including examples such as Chester, Wallingford and Eynsham) for being located both near to a castle (Fig.6.5) and in an urban area (Aston, 2009, 75). The adjacent situation of Shrewsbury's castle and monastery near to the boundary of the settlement can be compared to other contemporary towns. A good example is the imposition of an Anglo-Norman castle and Benedictine priory by William fitzOsbern and his followers at Monmouth shortly after the Conquest (Kissack, 1996, 23). The town's situation, surrounded on three sides by the river Wye and the Monnow (Fig.6.6), is clearly similar to the town of Shrewsbury, in addition to the placement of the lordly residence in the 'neck' of the promontory. In both cases, in order to enter the settlement, visitors would have to pass adjacent to both the castle and the monastic site, and therefore be subjected to these symbols of the lord's power. The suburb of Shrewsbury which Roger initially granted in 1083 later became known as Abbey Foregate (Fig.6.7), and, being legally controlled by the abbot, in effect became the abbey's own borough (Baker, 1998, 3). This suburb probably entails the '39 burgesses formerly paying geld' that Domesday refers to as having been granted by the earl to the abbey (*Domesday*, 688).



*Fig.6.6: The layout of medieval Monmouth, showing the location of the castle and priory near the 'neck' of the promontory upon which the town was founded. The main urban settlement stretched from the West Gate to the Western Gate beyond these high status sites (Soulsby, 1983, 182).*



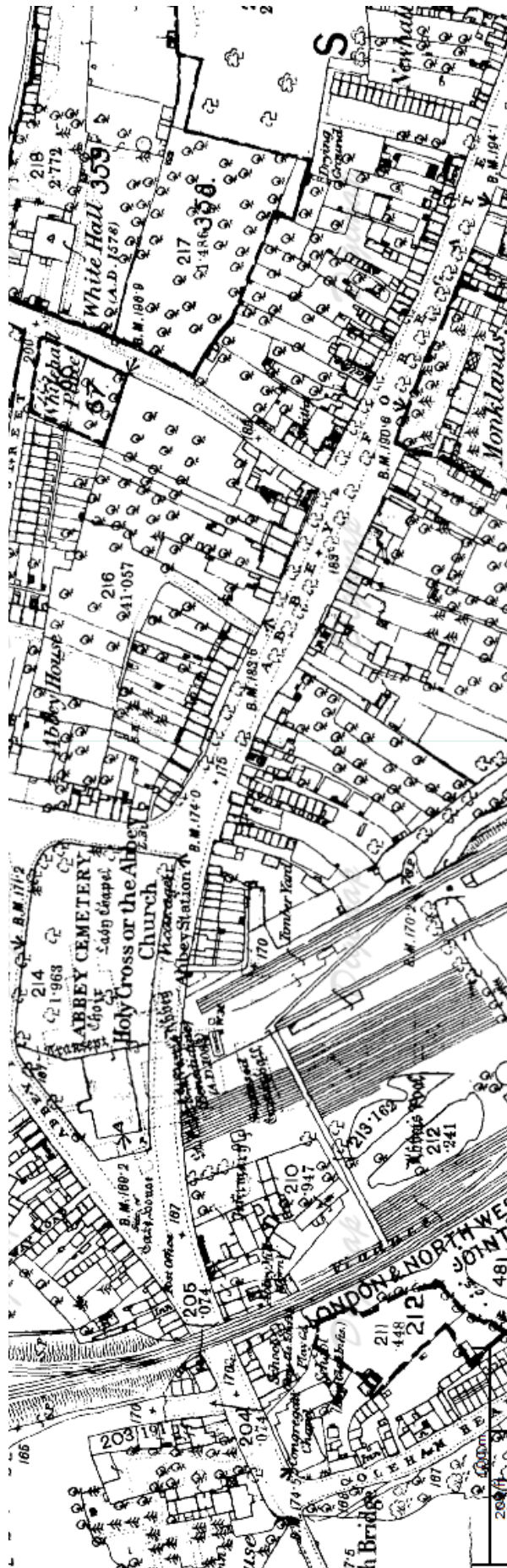


Fig.6.7: First edition Ordnance Survey map of Shrewsbury Abbey and Abbey Foregate. Note the clearly defined burgage plots along the main road. Note also the position of the abbey precinct, although much of it by this point has been destroyed by subsequent building work. An interesting feature shown here is the location of two ponds called 'Abbot's Pool' to the south of the precinct (Map: Digimap, 2012).

The abbey at Shrewsbury was dissolved by Henry VIII on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 1540, and a number of buildings from the monastic complex were completely destroyed or stripped of valuable materials, although much of the abbey church itself was kept for use as the parish church (Baker, 1998, 14). Unfortunately though, most of the claustral buildings that had survived the dissolution were flattened in 1836 to make way for the London-Holyhead road (Pevsner, 1958, 262), so the standing remains of the monastery are severely limited.



*Fig.6.8: The famous view of the western end of Shrewsbury abbey (Photo: Tim Hollinghurst, April 2012).*

The surviving elements of the abbey church today are the nave, aisles and the (14<sup>th</sup>-century) western tower (Fig.6.8), with most of the nave (Fig.6.9) (including the main arcades and the arch separating the north aisle from what was the north transept before it was destroyed) thought to date from the time of the initial foundation (Shropshire SMR, PRN 62624). The original church measured around 70 metres in length, and incorporated an aisled, six-bay nave and transepts with a crossing tower

between (Baker, 2010, 114). The church did not increase much in size during its time as due to the abbey's limited wealth (the relatively small cloister is also indicative of this), and it is thought that the original east end consisting of a rounded apse (Fig.5) was retained until the monastery's dissolution (Shropshire SMR, PRN 62624). The crossing tower and the transepts were also knocked down at this time (Fig.4) along with much of the rest of the east end of the church including the Lady Chapel, chancel and choir (Baker, 1998, 24). It seems that there was also originally a screen separating the nave into two areas for monastic and parochial use (the abbey church was also used by the parish), evidenced by the large rectangular pier in the middle of each side's arcade (Shropshire SMR, PRN 62624). Interestingly, the font in the church is thought to have been fashioned from a sizable Roman capital (Pevsner, 1958, 261).

Gilchrist (2005, 41) points out in her study of Norwich Cathedral Close that the church and the cloister were the heart of a monastery, with the surrounding features of the wider precinct acting as a 'buffer zone' to limit secular access to the central, most exclusive areas of the monastic complex. The 'protection' of the church and cloister will have been more important in an urban monastery such as Shrewsbury than a remote one (for example, Wigmore Abbey), as within a settlement it would be far closer and therefore less separated from the secular world. In a rural setting, the separation of the monastic property would have been far more obvious as it was not directly attached to an urban settlement.





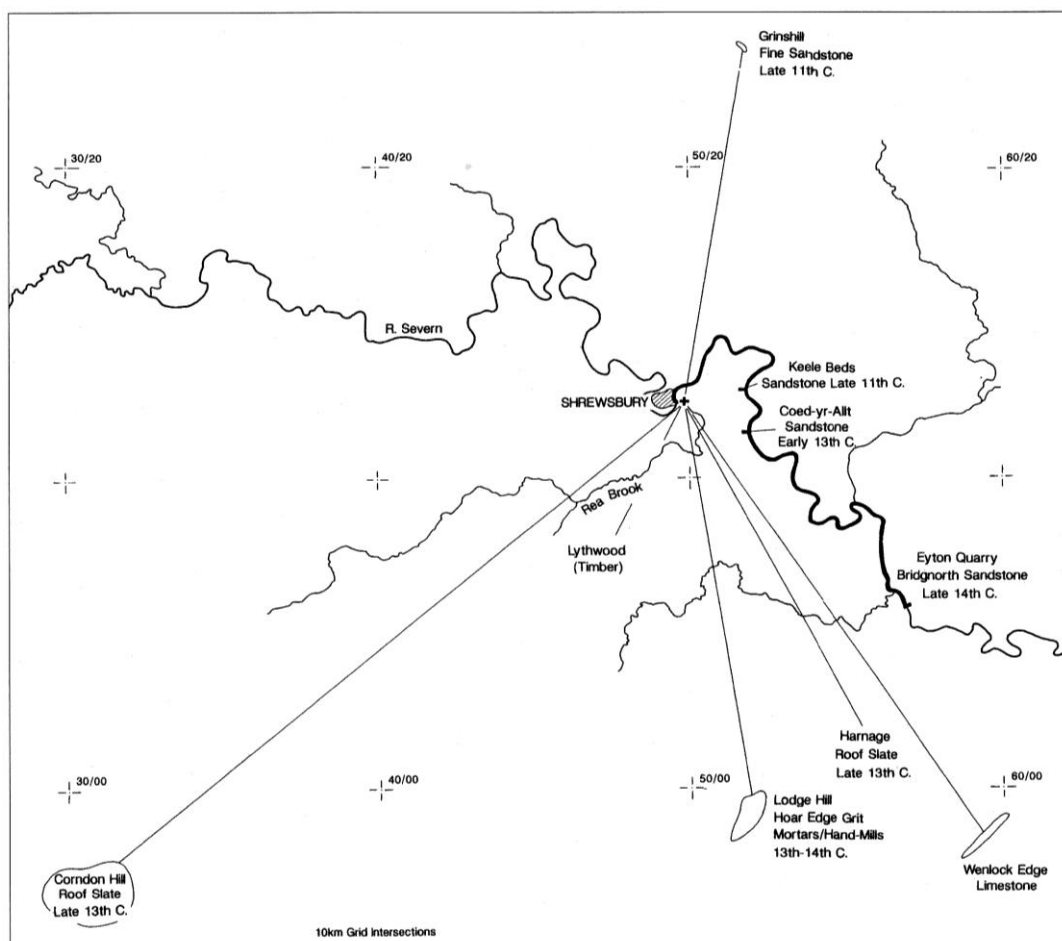
*Fig.6.9: The interior of the abbey church from the nave, looking towards the chancel, which was rebuilt in the late 1800s (Pevsner, 1958, 260). Note the short, round piers of the Norman arcade in the nave (Photo: Tim Hollinghurst, April 2012).*



*Fig.6.10: Shrewsbury Abbey from the south. Note the rough stone on the side of the building that shows where the south transept used to be located before it was demolished (Photo: Tim Hollinghurst, April 2012).*



The abbey's distinctive reddish coloured exterior (Fig.6.10) is a result of the local sandstone that it was constructed from. The earlier phases use Keele Beds sandstone, which will have been gathered from outcrops of rock along the river Severn within the abbey's own lands (Fig.6.11) (Baker, 2010, 114). The later rebuilding work in the 14<sup>th</sup>-century is noticeable for its slightly different brownish fine-grained sandstone that was used, this time from Eyton-upon-Severn at the abbey's own quarry adjacent to the river (Baker, 1998, 24). Availability of building materials (and a way of transporting them) was a vitally important consideration for the building of a new monastery, so it was a great advantage when the benefactor was able to grant a supply source such as a quarry, as in this case at Shrewsbury (Greene, 1992, 69).



*Fig.6.11: Map showing the sources of building materials used by Shrewsbury Abbey, including the aforementioned Keele Beds sandstone and the Eyton-upon-Severn quarry on the banks of the river. Lythwood, a timber source to the south of Shrewsbury, was an area of parkland owned by the abbey, demonstrating the frequent use of these monastic assets for construction materials (Baker, 2010, 69)*

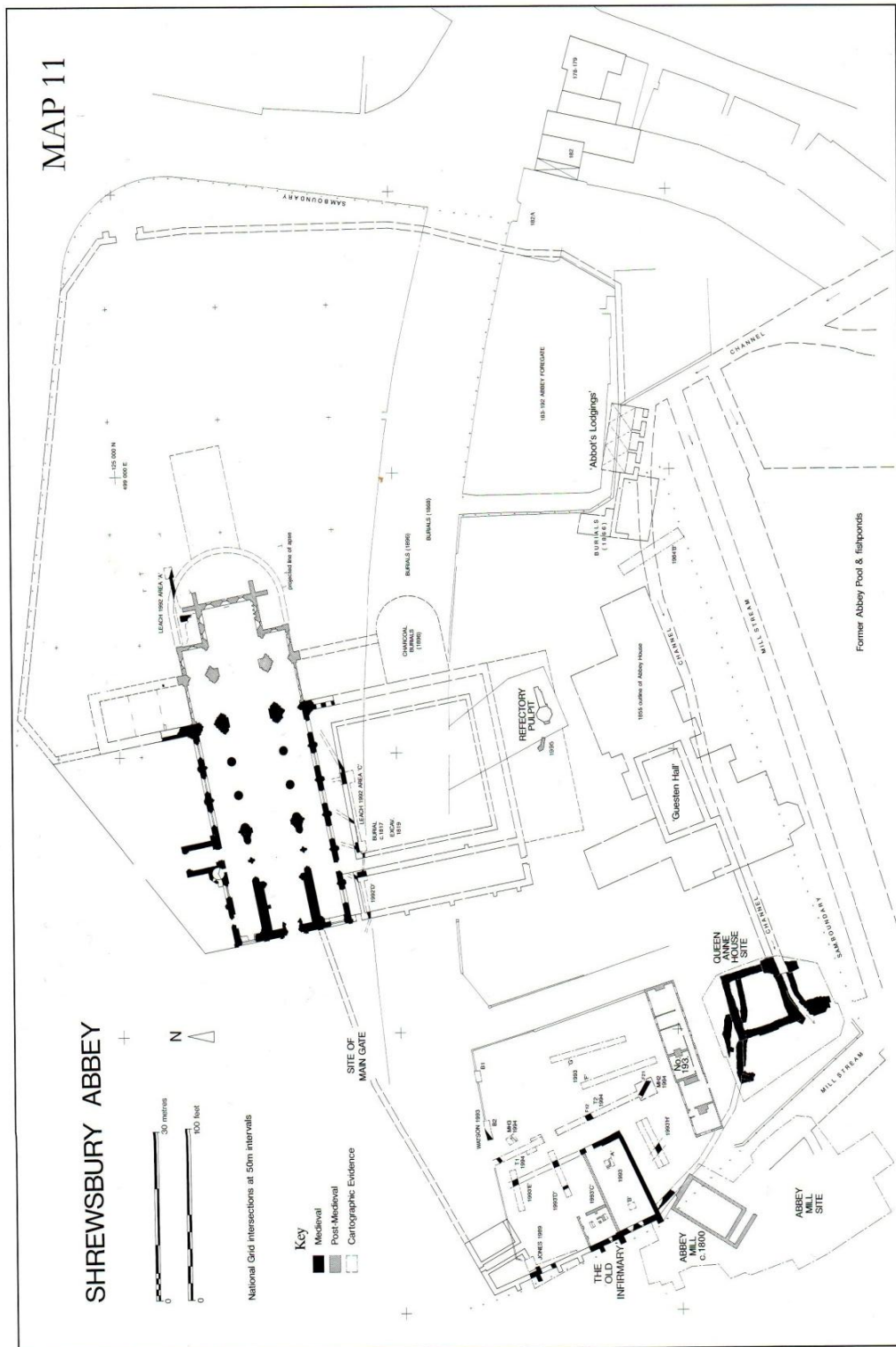


Fig.6.12: Map of Shrewsbury Abbey precinct showing the locations of the standing buildings, features known from archaeological study, and from cartographic evidence. Note the positions of the north and south transepts and extended rounded apse of the abbey church, along with the attached cloisters that are now under the path of the main road. Also note the position of the former fishponds to the south of the buildings (Map: Baker, 2010, Map 11).

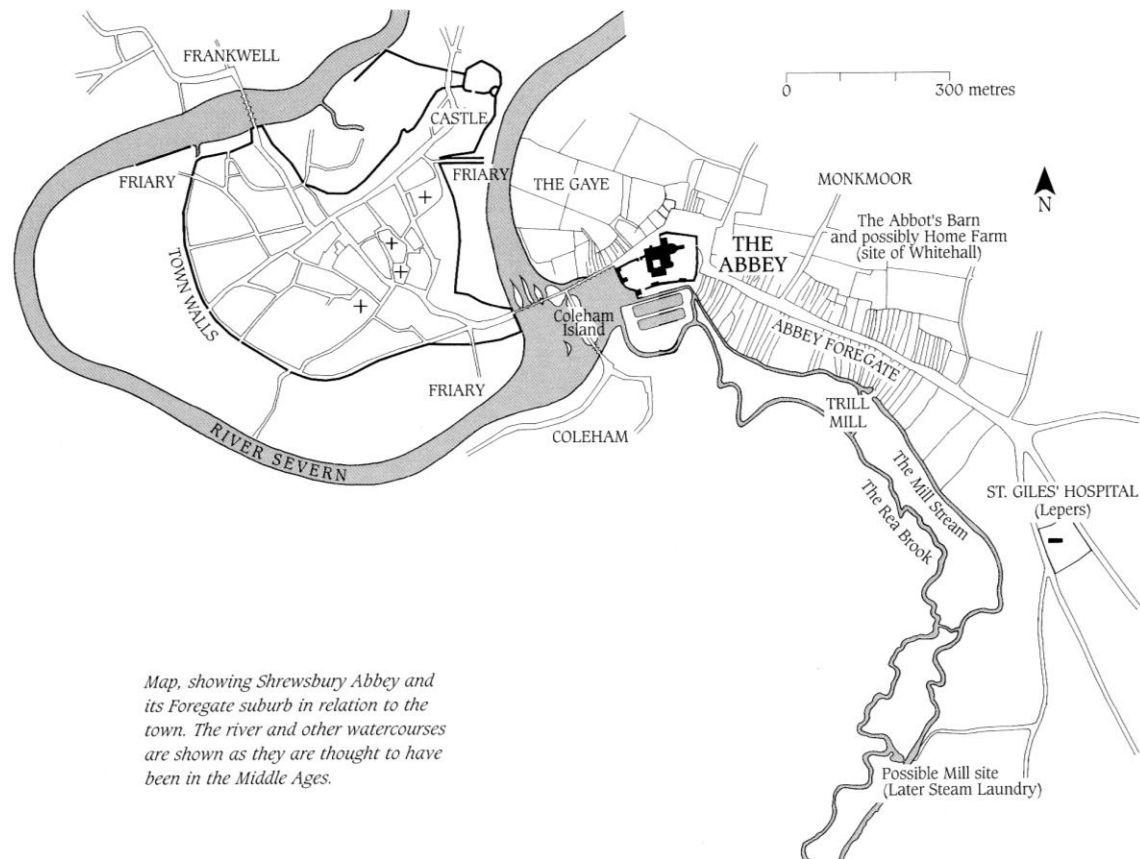
As has already been mentioned, the majority of the monastery's buildings have been lost throughout the centuries, but there are a few aspects of the complex that have (though not always fully) survived. One such example is known as the Old Infirmary (although it is fairly certain that this was nothing to do with its purpose) located to the south-west of the abbey church (Fig.5.12). In the Norman period, this building will have directly overlooked the river Severn, and a large, low lying arch (now blocked and partially under ground level) in the south wall indicates the presence of a possible slipway or dock, which is unusual in monastic architecture (Baker, 1998, 36). The standing medieval remains of the building also include a 13<sup>th</sup>-century first floor hall and a single wall of what is thought to have been a chamber block with a series of arched doorways opening onto the former waterfront on the lower floor, probably onto some form of timber landing stage (Shropshire SMR, PRN 62635). It seems that these sections will have been used for accommodating guests, whereas the lower storey opening onto the Severn will have served as a covered landing stage for goods and visitors entering the abbey via the river (Baker, 1998, 36). Another accommodation site of the abbey, the 'Guesten Hall', and part of the abbot's lodgings survived the dissolution, only to be flattened during building work in 1866 (Baker, 2010, 142).

The abbey made extensive use of its waterside location. An excavation in 2004 by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit around the abbey precinct uncovered a possible fishtrap on the Severn, and what seems likely to have been a walkway or a jetty (English Heritage NMR, PRN 1505151). If this was the case, the jetty could point to the economic activity (such as milling, as will be discussed later) of the monastery, as the river Severn will have been used to carry produce and will therefore have necessitated a loading and unloading area. The fact that local Keele Beds sandstone (taken from along the Severn) was used to construct the abbey has already been mentioned; this will have been unloaded as closely as possible to the building site and would therefore have needed a jetty such as this excavation uncovered.

The riverside situation of the monastery also provided it with the opportunity for the construction of fishponds, despite spatial restrictions due to the urban location. The area to the south of the precinct was located in the floodplain of the Rea Brook (Baker, 2010, 62-3), meaning that this additional waterlogging made it an ideal situation for ponds (although also necessitating reclamation activity for the

construction of buildings). Access to edible fish was highly important for a monastic community owing to the limitations on meat consumption that were imposed by their religious way of life. Fish could be caught from natural water sources such as the sea (if situated near the coast), a river (again depending on the situation) or from man-made ponds designed specifically to breed fish (Greene, 1992, 124). Evidence of a fishtrap adjacent to the buildings known as the ‘Old Infirmary’ (Baker, 2010, 63) confirms that the abbey did use a natural source of fish in addition to their ponds. Early maps of Shrewsbury (such as John Rocque’s map of 1746) depict two large rectangular ponds located immediately to the south of the abbey precinct running parallel to each other between the Severn, the Rea and the mill stream (Fig.6.13). Being separate ponds, they are likely to have had different functional purposes such as breeding or storing different species of fish (Bond, 1988, 95). Both ponds have now been filled in.

The First edition Ordnance Survey map of the area (Fig.6.7) also shows the location of two roughly semi-circular ponds called ‘Abbot’s Pool’. The Abbot, as the head of the monastery, was a highly prominent figure, and possessing his own ponds will have set him apart from the rest of the inhabitants and helped to highlight his status. The narrow, straight section between these pools may additionally have functioned as some sort of walkway (see Creighton, 2009, 115 for examples of walkways between ponds influencing the landscape of castles and palaces) leading to other areas of the monastic complex in addition to its practical use of separating the two features. However, as these ponds and the ones directly to the south of the abbey do not both appear in the same map (the First edition Ordnance Survey map is the only one to depict the so called Abbot’s Pool) it may have been that these were actually the same feature, but represented in slightly different positions in different maps.



*Fig.6.13: Map detailing the position of the abbey and its suburb in Shrewsbury. Note the position of the watercourses as they were thought to have been during the abbey's lifetime and the situation of the ponds. There also appears to have been a possible farm belonging to the abbey at Monkmoor, although there is little archaeological evidence for this (Map: Baker, 1998, 2).*

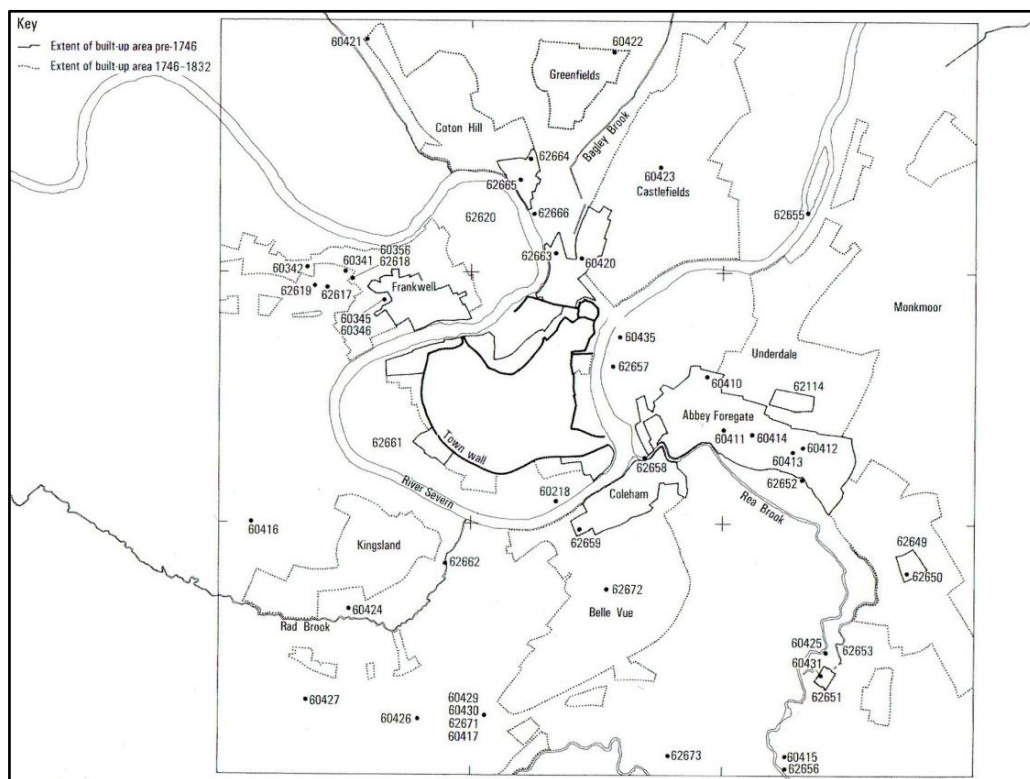
Medieval life required a way of grinding grain for flour, meal and malt, and it was therefore important for people to have access to a mill of some kind. However, this necessity for everyday life made it possible for influential figures such as a lord or a religious institution in possession of a mill to gain significant income through charging tolls for the use of it (Bond, 2004, 310-12). Shrewsbury Abbey was able to do just that; the original grant by Montgomery included the three watermills located on the river Rea, which, in 1121, became the first legal milling monopoly recorded (in a charter granted by Henry I) despite being a major source of contention due to the abbey's ability to profit at the expense of the townspeople in this way (Baker, 1998, 11). According to Owen & Blakeway (1825, 12), the three mills are thought to have been the Abbey Mill, Trill Mill and Burnt Mill, whose sites were still being utilised at

the authors' time of writing. Before the legal monopoly however, the monastery had already enjoyed a geographical one; the abbey had been gifted all three of the Foregate mills on the only watercourse in the vicinity that was well suited to the practice. This meant that, owing to the lack of comparable sites for new mills and Shrewsbury's increasing population who obviously required the use of a mill to grind their corn, the mills were a hugely profitable resource (Baker, 2010, 113). However, there is little remaining archaeological evidence for the Norman watermills that belonged to Shrewsbury abbey. For example, the mill known to have been on Monk's Road in Abbey Foregate was the subject of an excavation in the early 1990s, but, in the six trenches dug, there were no features connected to either a medieval mill or a mill pool found (English Heritage NMR, PRN 1087348). The same story counts for an excavation of the Abbey Mill site; no trace of the medieval mill was found even though the dig was expected to yield evidence dating back prior to the Conquest (the earliest evidence discovered only dated to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century) (Shropshire SMR, PRN 60375).

The watermills seem to have been among Shrewsbury Abbey's most profitable possessions. Orderic Vitalis mentions that Earl Roger's original endowment was modest in terms of lands and rents, although later gifts by the earl and his successors improved its income (*Orderic Vitalis*, 203). It was never a particularly wealthy monastery though, and never housed a large monastic community; for example, there were just 17 monks and an abbot residing there at the time of its dissolution (Baker, 1998, 5). Unlike some of the richer, rural monasteries of the Augustinian and Cistercian orders, Shrewsbury, owing to being located in an urban situation, was not completely surrounded by park or arable land (such as we have seen at Wigmore in the previous case study). Nonetheless, it seems that the abbey did own some parkland. Cantor's gazetteer of medieval parks (1983, 63) lists the abbot of Shrewsbury having licence to impark at Lythwood in 1346 (it was from here that much of the timber used for the abbey was sourced, see Fig.6.11). The Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey also mentions a wooded section of Baschurch Park (in northern Shropshire) as being granted to John Lestrangle by the abbot in 1194-5 (Shropshire SMR, PRN 07562), so it can be safely assumed that this was also under the ownership of the abbey for a period of time.

There is a lack of information regarding farmland run by the abbey, yet it can be assumed that, with the need of monasteries to be self-sufficient, they will have

needed access to agriculture on some level. However, as Fig.6.14 shows, there was a large, undeveloped area adjacent to Abbey Foregate called 'Monkmoor'. The name implies a connection with the monastery, and the undeveloped location just to the east of the abbey's borough suggests that it would have been a suitable place for agricultural land attached to the monastery. Indeed, Baker's map (Fig.6.13) suggests that it may have been farmland, labelling it as 'possibly Home Farm' although there is little archaeological evidence of practices in the area.



*Fig.6.14: Map of Shrewsbury and its immediate surroundings, showing Abbey Foregate across the river from the main settlement. Note the large, undeveloped land to the east of Abbey Foregate called Monkmoor (Map: Baker, 2010, 6).*

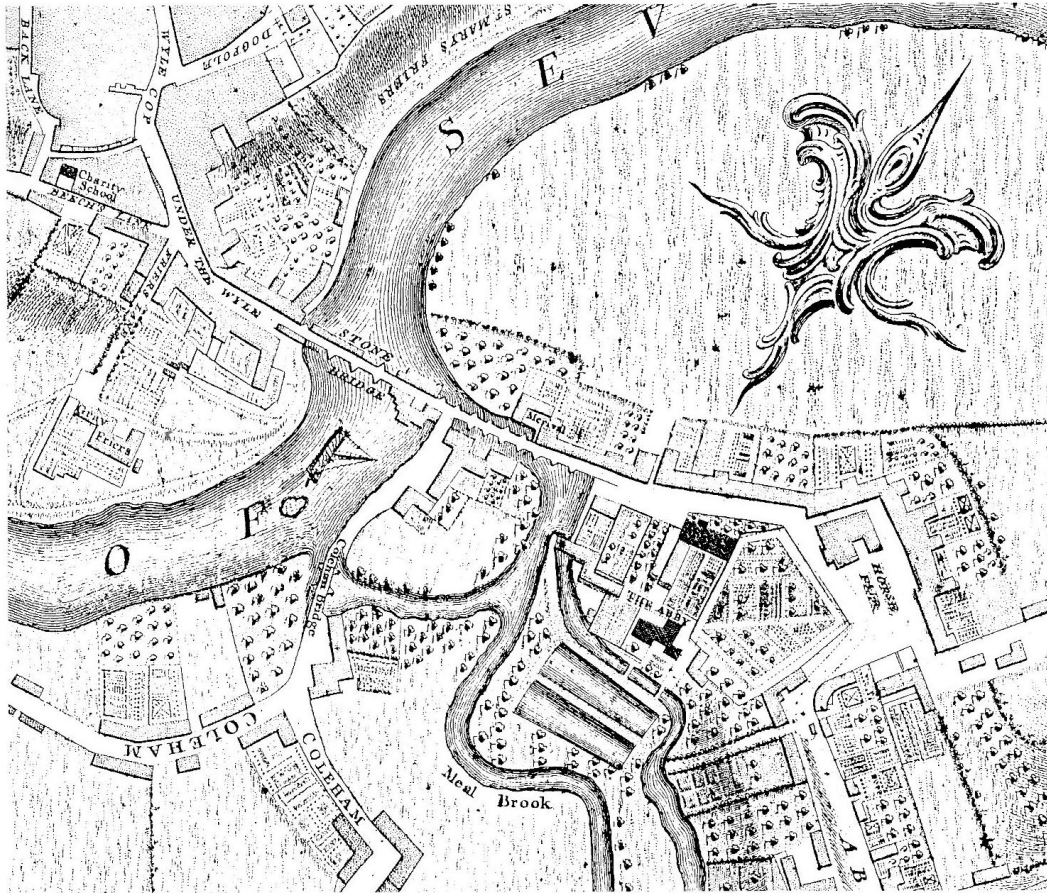
Due to the adjacent location, this land may well have been tended by the inhabitants of the monastery, but Shrewsbury, like other religious houses, also owned more distant land. It may have been that Shrewsbury Abbey was not directly involved with the running of this land under their ownership, instead gathering rents (often in kind) from their farms (Aston, 2009, 24). We also know that, soon after the abbey's foundation, it was granted the right to hold annual three-day fairs, with the area later known as 'Horsefair' (Fig.6.15), immediately outside the precinct to the north of the

church created specifically for the purpose (Baker, 1998, 12). The fair could be evidence that the monastery had excess produce from their lands to sell, and, as tolls could be imposed on those coming in to use the fair, will also have been an extra source of income.

The abbey also seems to have possessed a vineyard, apparently next to the Severn in Shrewsbury (the exact location is not known), which is mentioned in a charter of Henry II to the monastery in July 1155 (Shropshire SMR, PRN 62553). Although it is unclear where this was, it is likely that Shrewsbury's vineyard was fairly small and located near to the monastic precinct; in the border area vineyards were generally limited in size (most measured less than two acres) and usually situated close to the estate centre, particularly those belonging to influential ecclesiastical figures (Creighton, 2009, 73). It will also have been situated on a south-facing slope to maximise the plants' exposure to the sunlight. Vineyards were highly expensive assets in terms of maintenance, and were also very labour intensive (McLean, 1981, 257) and so are another monastic feature that, like their secular counterparts, can be viewed as high status features. They seem to have been a fairly common feature of monasteries from an early stage (Domesday records a dozen such sites), but it seems that this sort of cultivation reached its peak when climate was best suited in the years between 1100 and 1220 (Bond, 2004, 166). Shrewsbury's vineyard dates to this time, so will have taken advantage of the favourable conditions for wine-making along with many other religious sites.

Like many Benedictine establishments, the site of Shrewsbury Abbey included a monastic garden, thought to have been situated in the open area to the east of the abbey church (Fig.6.15). This is in a similar location to the 'priory's great garden' at Norwich, which was a relatively large site placed to the east of the church and cloister, although fenced off from the inner precinct (Gilchrist, 2005, 61). Evidence for the garden at Shrewsbury no longer survives so it is difficult to ascertain the size, status or appearance of the feature, although it is fair to assume that it was limited in size owing to its enclosed urban site. Monastic gardens were usually only used by the community of monks within the abbey, rather than (as was often the case with gardens belonging to high status residences such as castles or palaces) being designed to be on display to impress the onlooker (Creighton, 2009, 49).





*Fig.6.15: The section of John Rocque's map of Shrewsbury that shows the abbey as it was in 1746. The old site of the abbey's fair (here called Horse Fair) and the monastic gardens immediately to the east of the abbey church are visible, as are the two fishponds (Map: Baker, 1998, 15).*

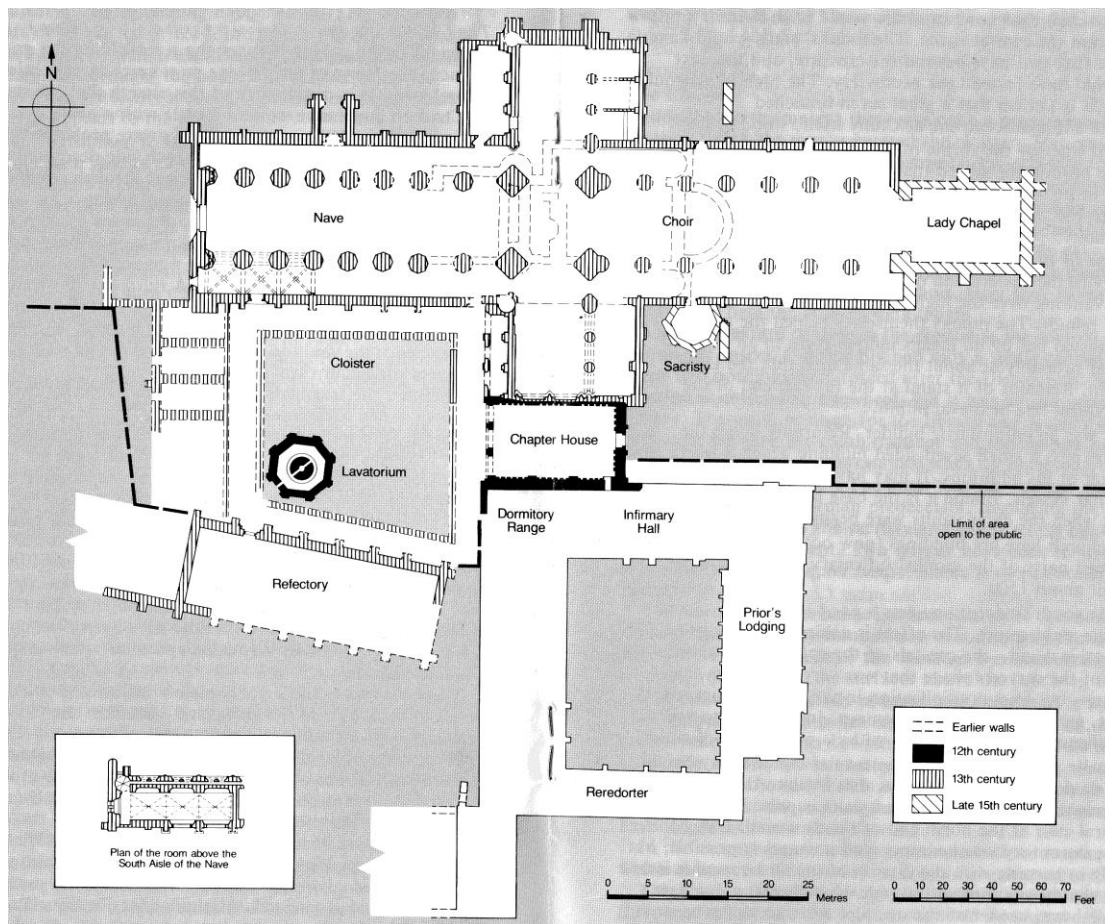
### **6.3.2 - Case Study Site:**

#### **Much Wenlock Priory.**

The original religious house at Much Wenlock was an Anglo-Saxon foundation, established in about 690 by Merewald (ruler of part of Mercia) as a nunnery, although there was also a small community of priests housed there at the time. The first abbess was the founder's daughter Milburga, who was later canonised and to whom the later priory was dedicated (Morley, 1985, 2). An excavation in 1901 discovered the remains of the foundations of what has been interpreted as the nunnery's original small church, which was destroyed in an attack on Mercia by the Danes in c.874 (Graham, 1965, 3). Before the Conquest, in about 1050, the nunnery was refounded as a Minster by Earl Leofric of Mercia (Shropshire SMR, PRN 00307),

so there was already a long religious history on the site before Roger de Montgomery's further re-foundation as a Cluniac priory shortly after his arrival in the country. Roger was known to have been a major benefactor of Cluny, and the monks brought over from Normandy for his new monastery were from the most prominent of its daughter houses, La Charité-sur-Loire, situated in the Burgundy region of central France (Pevsner, 1958, 207). La Charité was Wenlock's mother house, meaning that the priory was required (as stated in Earl Roger's charter) to pay them 100 shillings a year (Graham, 1965, 15). It was a fairly successful monastery, able to found other priories in Britain, and with a monastic community reaching as many as 50 inhabitants in the mid 12<sup>th</sup>-century (Knowles & Hadcock, 1971, 101). It also enjoyed a very high status, as, after Earl Robert's rebellion and forfeiture in 1102, the priory received the patronage of no lesser figures than the kings of England themselves; Henry III was known to have 'exercised a founder's rights of lodging' at Wenlock, even storing wine specially brought in from Bristol there for his use (Graham, 1965, 11). But like so many religious houses, Wenlock's downfall came with Henry VIII's dissolution, being signed over on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1540. Many of its buildings were stripped of valuable materials and left to deteriorate into ruins, although the prior's house was retained as a residence and some of the remaining buildings and estates were sold off (Morley, 1985, 4).

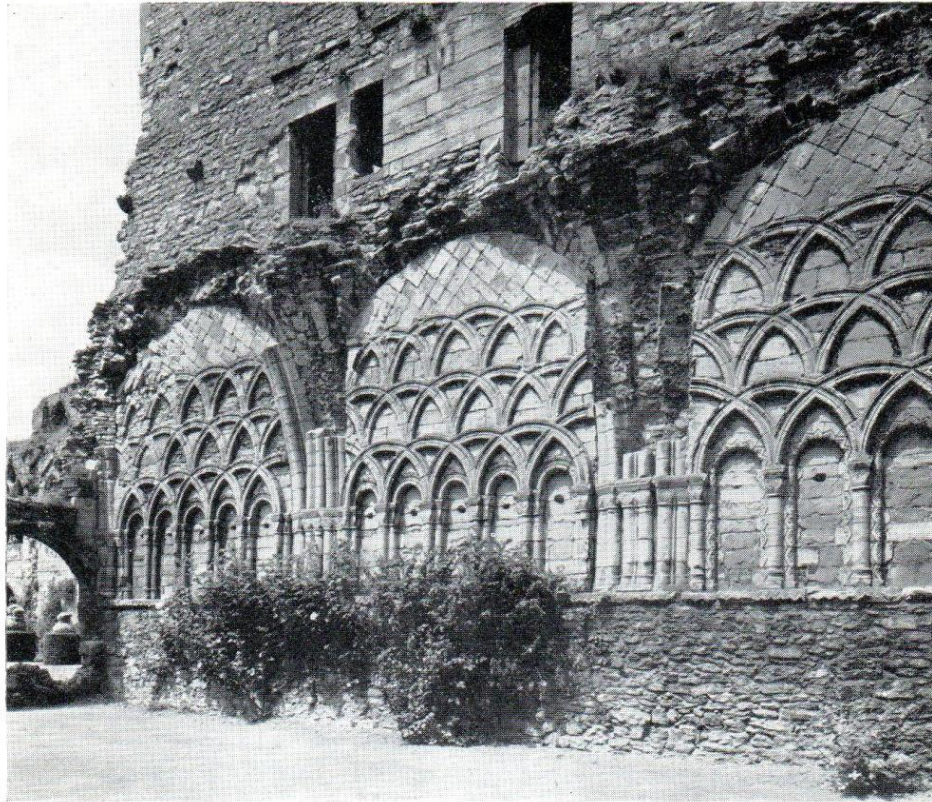
There are sufficient standing remains, or at least building foundations, at Much Wenlock to establish an accurate plan of the monastery's layout (Fig.6.16). The surviving parts of the priory church do not show evidence of Earl Roger's original foundation owing to a very large scale reconstruction (with royal patronage) in the early 13<sup>th</sup>-century (English Heritage NMR, Monument No. 72101). Fig.6.16 shows that the entire church, with the exception of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Lady Chapel, dates from this time. The rounded apse and building marked by the dotted line shows the apparent plan of the original church ascertained from the 1901 excavation finds, although there is some debate about whether this evidence actually comes from the second church, built by Leofric (Graham, 1965, 5). Surviving aspects of the rebuilt church consist of parts of the north and south transepts, sections of the west front and three bays of the nave's south aisle (English Heritage NMR, Monument No. 72101). The plan also shows an elevation of a room directly above this south aisle, which is a rare feature and thought to have been used as a small chapel to St Michael, to whom (with St Milburga) the priory was dedicated (Shropshire SMR, PRN 00307).



*Fig.6.16: The plan of the priory church and monastic buildings at Much Wenlock  
(Plan: Morley, 1985, 6-7).*

Connected to the south transept stands the remains of the highly decorative 12<sup>th</sup>-century chapter house (Fig.6.17). This building is roughly 11 x 6.5 metres, with the limestone walls still standing quite high and featuring three Roman style arches (probably windows) on the eastern wall (National Trust, PRN 54423\*0). The cloister is situated in the typical position attached to the south of the nave, and contains the remains of an ornate 12<sup>th</sup>-century *lavatorium*. This octagonal structure contains some high quality carvings despite its function as basically a washing area (Fig.6.18). This can be attributed to the fact that cleanliness was vitally important to a monk not only for hygienic reasons, but also as a symbol of spiritual purity (Greene, 1992, 116). In most English monasteries, the *lavatorium* was usually set into a wall of the cloister (for example, at Norwich it took the form of a trough set into the cloister's west wall), rather than being a free-standing structure as occurs at Wenlock, but it seems that this was often a feature specific to Cluniac sites (with a few exceptions such as Durham's

monastic cathedral) in the country (Gilchrist, 2005, 93). The prior's lodge and aspects of the infirmary (including the chapel) were transformed into a private house after the monastery was dissolved (Shropshire SMR, PRN 00309), and there is also a ruin of a rectangular entrance gate tower to the priory, built of limestone but incorporating sandstone door and window jambs (National Trust, PRN 54420\*0).



*Fig.6.17: The elaborate Romanesque blind arcading within the ruin of the chapter house at Wenlock (Graham, 1965, 19).*





*Fig.6.18: The detailed carving on the lavitorium at Wenlock priory, depicting Christ on the Lake (Photo: Greene, 1992, 116).*

The precinct at Much Wenlock possessed a large pool situated to the east of the priory's infirmary (fed by a long pond bay) measuring around 160 metres in length and about 1.4 metres deep (English Heritage NMR, Monument No. 968870). Presumably this is the pond mentioned in Domesday supplying the inhabitants of the monastery with fish. The pond bay may well also have supplied a watermill belonging to the priory. A small series of earthworks made up from a several platforms and connecting channels thought to have carried water has been interpreted as a possible mill site near to the bay (English Heritage NMR, Monument No. 72152), and one of the fields just to the south of the bay is named the 'Mill Damm' on a plan of the area created in 1714 (National Trust, PRN 54401\*0). We know for definite that the priory owned 'two mills serving the monks' in Much Wenlock manor by the time of Domesday (*Domesday*, 689), so it is possible that these examples of evidence point to one of these.

According to Cantor's gazetteer of the medieval parks in England, the prior of Wenlock had a licence to impark land at Oxenbold (near Stanton Long) in the reign of Henry III, and a licence to impark woodland at Madeley in 1283 (Cantor, 1983, 63), the latter of which apparently had deer from the royal parks introduced in the 1290s (Shropshire SMR, PRN 07776). This was probably for the purpose of hunting for particularly high status patrons and guests of the priory, and is a symbol of the elite standing of the establishment. However, Wenlock did not appear to own parkland directly adjacent to the actual priory itself in the medieval period.

At Madeley, there are fragments of a 13<sup>th</sup>-century monastic grange belonging to Wenlock priory within the 16<sup>th</sup>-century building that still stand (English Heritage NMR, Monument No. 71890). Whether or not this or any other farmland they owned was directly cultivated by the monks themselves is unclear, but there is evidence of ridge and furrow earthworks to the north-east of the priory site at Wenlock, preserved due to being located in a narrow valley bottom unsuitable for modern ploughing (National Trust, PRN 54415\*0). As we know from Domesday that the priory owned the whole manor of Much Wenlock, we can assume the monastery benefitted from this adjacent farmland in some way, perhaps as tithe payment in kind to help sustain the monastic community.

Earl Roger's choice of land to grant to Much Wenlock was quite an unusual site for the construction of a Cluniac priory in that this order nearly always built their monasteries on completely new sites, rather than refounding pre-existing religious establishments with Anglo-Saxon monks in residence who required either retraining or displacing (Platt, 1984, 11). An aerial photograph (Fig.6.19) illustrates that the priory is situated in a relatively rural location, on the eastern edge of a small settlement. In its heyday the priory will have been highly visible to those living in the area, and, having been so impressively and elaborately enlarged from the pre-Conquest minster, will have been an impressive show of Norman wealth and dominance. Much Wenlock is thought to have been an entirely rural settlement in 1066, with the town slowly developing around the monastery (Graham, 1965, 9). The priory had the right (granted in 1138) to hold a yearly, three day long fair, and a charter of 1227 gave it the privilege of a weekly market (Newman & Pevsner, 2006, 418). Bond (2004, 277-8) includes Much Wenlock on a map of monastic boroughs, featuring as one of only three in the country belonging to a Cluniac priory, although it is not very clear when it officially acquired the status.



*Fig.6.19: an aerial view of Much Wenlock priory showing the standing remains and outlines of building foundations. The settlement is located immediately to the west of the priory. The gardens visible on the site are from after the dissolution; it is unclear where the monastic gardens (other than the cloister garden) would be, but it is likely that there was at least one belonging to the priory (Photo: Google Maps, 2012).*

By the time of Domesday, Much Wenlock priory already owned a large number of manors (13 are listed, all of which are located within approximately 30 kilometres of the priory) and it presumably, as quite a prominent monastery, will have been gifted further land during its long history. The wealth accumulated by their property will have helped the priory become prosperous enough to found its own daughter houses. By 1169-70, the priory was able to found a new Cluniac monastery in Paisley (Scotland), sending 12 of their monks along with a prior to run it (Graham, 1965, 9). It also maintained dependencies at Dudley, St Helens and nearby Church Preen, all staffed by monks from Wenlock (Knowles & Hadcock, 1971, 101).

### **6.3.3 - Case Study Site:**

#### **St Mary Magdalene, Quatford (later Bridgnorth).**

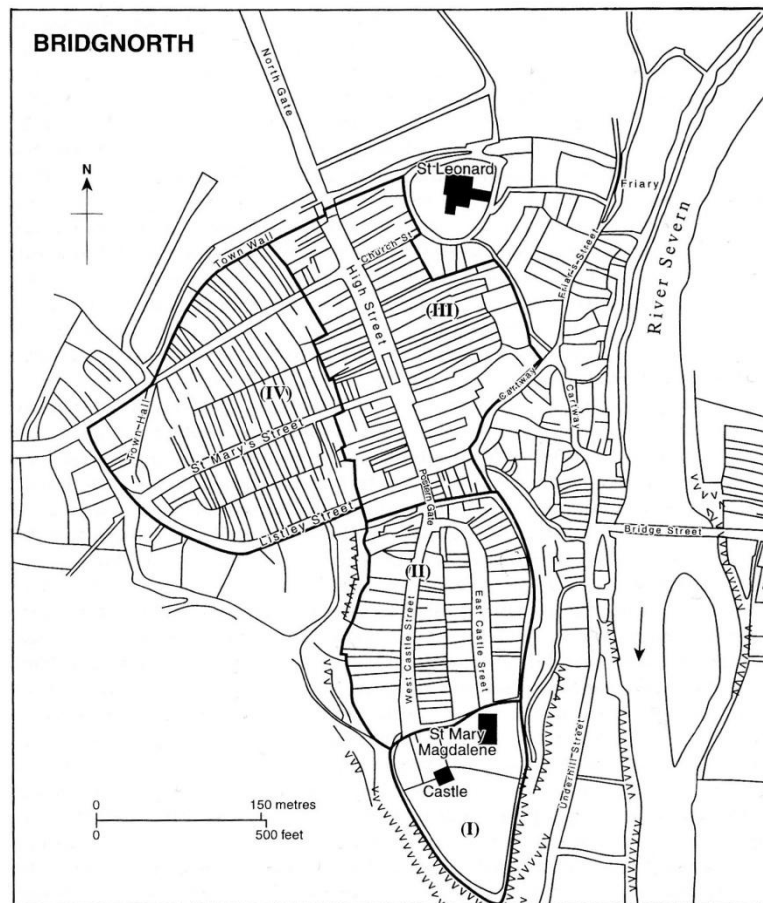
Earl Roger founded a collegiate church in Quatford, Shropshire, in 1084-6, contemporary to his founding of a borough there. He also constructed a motte and bailey castle alongside the river Severn and just to the west of his church (Newman & Pevsner, 2006, 481-2), although this is difficult to date making it impossible to

ascertain which was begun first, or even if they were part of the same building programme. In 1086 the settlement is referred to as a borough (although apparently rendering nothing), and appears to have been acquired by the earl from St Milburga's, Much Wenlock (*Domesday*, 694). However, the borough was a transient presence, as, in c.1090, all its functions (including the chapel and castle) were moved to nearby Bridgnorth by Robert de Belleme (son of Roger de Montgomery and the future third Earl of Shrewsbury) who owned the manor at the time (Lilley, 1999, 13). All Saints church at Claverley, another foundation by Earl Roger, was originally connected to the collegiate church at Quatford (Leonard, 1994, 38).

Quatford church was constructed in a prominent position on a sandstone cliff above the settlement itself, and still retains elements of its Norman foundation. This includes the chancel, built of tufa (a form of limestone) and featuring a wide, rounded chancel arch with unfortunately rather worn details (Pevsner, 1958, 233). The font and parts of the west tower are also thought to date to this initial building period (Shropshire SMR, PRN 00407). As a collegiate church, the precinct would have included some form of accommodation for priests, and owned a tithe barn (Shropshire SMR, PRN 05166).

Robert's strategy of constructing an imposing castle and establishing an adjacent settlement using the population of a nearby town or borough, like he did at Bridgnorth, was a tried and tested method of securing control over contested territories; he had previously forcibly transferred the inhabitants of Vignats in southern Normandy to nearby Fourches, in the same way that he moved the people of Quatford to his chosen site at Bridgnorth (Lilley, 1999, 13). Earl Robert moved the college to the chapel inside the grounds of Bridgnorth castle in 1101-2 (Fig.6.20), where it is thought to have been located in the outer bailey and staffed by six (mostly non-resident) prebendaries and a dean (Pounds, 1990, 235). It was mentioned earlier in this project, in the family history section of the Montgomerys, that at the time that he moved the church into the bailey, Robert was strengthening a number of his castles (including Bridgnorth) for a rebellion against the king. Perhaps with such an aim, he felt the need to have a religious presence in his castle. After his exile in 1102, the church was given five dependent churches within a fairly substantial administrative area, and granted its own ecclesiastical court (Shropshire SMR, PRN 05631). Nothing remains of this church today, as in 1792-4 it was replaced by a new building designed by Thomas Telford (Newman & Pevsner, 2006, 162).





*Fig.6.20: Plan of Bridgnorth, showing the location of the castle in relation to the settlement, and the position of the church and college of St Mary Magdalene within the inner bailey (Plan: Lilley, 1999, 14).*

Now that these two case studies have been completed, the next stage for this project is to connect the findings with the academic research in order to provide a coherent discussion of the topic, which will help to construct an overall picture of the religious patronage of the Anglo-Norman lords in the Welsh border area.

## **Chapter 7 - Discussion of Case Studies.**

This section will look at the findings from the case studies of religious institutions patronised by the Mortimer and Montgomery families. Firstly the patronage of these families will be compared in order to ascertain patterns and differences between them. Following this, particular aspects of the monasteries and their settings that have been considered in the previous section will be analysed in relation to current theories and debates regarding the structures and meanings of religious landscapes. Unfortunately few past studies of individual monastic sites have given much regard to the wider landscape (the case studies in the Welsh marches have highlighted this issue), concentrating much more on the monastic church and immediately adjacent buildings. Therefore, although some more subject-specific publications such as Gilchrist's book on Norwich Cathedral Close (2005) have proved valuable sources, several theories about the implications of landscape features occurring in the monasteries under discussion are compared to or taken from recent studies of castle landscapes by scholars such as Oliver Creighton and Robert Liddiard. This is due to the similarity of many features, but also the limited research available about how aspects of the monastic landscape relate to wealth and status. This section will enable conclusions to be drawn about how a benefactor could gain from connecting himself to a religious establishment, both in a spiritual and status-enhancing sense, but also demonstrate how a monastery could be similar to a castle in respect of its high status features.

### **7.1 - Comparison of the Mortimer and Montgomery Religious Patronage.**

The two case studies focussing on the Mortimer family of Wigmore and the Montgomery family of Shrewsbury have brought up some interesting talking points. There are a number of similarities in their religious patronage, but also several notable variations. When making comparisons it is important to remember that these families, whilst both being highly influential Marcher lords, enjoyed the peak of their power and status at different stages in the Norman period (the Montgomerys in the period immediately after the Conquest, and the Mortimers in the latter half of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century), and therefore will have followed slightly different trends accordingly. It must also be noted that we are only looking at three characters in a period of just over 30 years for the Earls of Shrewsbury, whereas the Mortimers of Wigmore remained

influential figures long after the time of interest for this study. Obviously this difference will at least partially account for the fewer known cases of foundation and patronage by members of the Montgomery family.

Members of both families had previously established monasteries in Normandy before their English foundations, and we have seen how benefactions such as land grants continued to be given to French monasteries by subsequent generations. However, the Mortimer family seem to have been very loyal to the institutions begun by their ancestors, supporting their own monasteries in France (such as the Augustinian abbey of St Victor-en-Caux) until the abbey at Wigmore was constructed in 1172, when they seemingly exchanged their support for the monasteries on the Continent for their new institution at their English base. Roger de Montgomery's sons seem to have had less to do with their father's foundations in France (with the exception of Arnulf's grants in Pembroke to Roger's pre-Conquest foundation at Séez), apparently choosing institutions according to fashion or personal choice. For example, both Hugh and Arnulf gave land to the Benedictine abbey of La Sauve-Majeure in the Bordelais, for no obvious reason other than that the founder of that particular religious house had a large following with major figures throughout Normandy at the time. Hugh even gave his father's collegiate church at Quatford to this French abbey when he became earl (Mason, 1962, 19). At this early stage after the Conquest it was typical for benefactions including English tithes, lands and churches owned by the new lords in the country to be granted to Norman houses (at least for the first generation), whereas generous support of English houses in this phase was rather selective (Green, 2002, 400).

We have also already seen that Roger himself upheld his generous support of his previous Benedictine foundations at Séez, Almenèches and Troarn by land grants from Sussex, so even he, with his huge power and influence in England, still kept up the support of his initial monastic foundations in Normandy. Conversely, when Wigmore Abbey was built and the Mortimers gave grants to various other religious buildings, they had been firmly established in England for several generations and were therefore much more confident in focussing their assets around their baronial centre on the Anglo-Welsh border rather than spreading them between England and Normandy.

But did the newly founded English monasteries follow the same patterns as their pre-Conquest establishments? It is difficult to find much evidence for the

Mortimer family's support of the abbey of St Victor-en-Caux, but their monastic foundations in England were spread across a wider area than the Montgomerys' (although with a similar cluster around their *caput*), perhaps at least in part due to the advanced situation of Norman rule in Wales by the time they were influential meaning that they could expand into a wider area. A closer inspection of the Montgomery patronage brings up some interesting points. In the Shrewsbury area, the foundations are generally quite close together, and it is here (the family's main seat in England) that the larger monastic sites are located, with the Earl's additional land in Sussex being used to endow the family's French establishments. In Normandy the Montgomery sites at Séez, Almenèches and Troarn do not have the same proximity to each other (see Fig.6.2 in the previous chapter), perhaps because the family was already firmly established here unlike at their new border territory across the channel where monastic patronage was useful as one of the instruments of conquest. But it is also likely to have been linked to the fact that Roger, through his marriage to Mabel de Belleme, gained authority over a great deal of land in southern Normandy, and it is in his wife's family territory that Séez and Almenèches are both situated (Potts, 1997, 123). These French Benedictine sites had mixture of rural and urban situations. Like Shrewsbury Abbey, St Martin de Séez was located within a settlement, but was able to enjoy a degree of separation from the rest of the community, but we have seen that the foundation at Almenèches was different to all the other sites established by the family in either England or France. Firstly, it was a nunnery rather than a monastery, and secondly, as was typical for this type of religious house at the time, it was not attached to a settlement but situated in a rural, isolated setting.

Different religious orders went in and out of fashion regularly during the medieval period (particularly after 1050), with some groups being hugely prominent until a new trend appeared. Benedictine and Cluniac monasteries (the latter a variant of the Benedictine rule coming into England from 1077) were the most common order from the time of the Conquest until the introduction and rapid spread of the Augustine movement from approximately 1104 (Greene, 1992, 15). Shrewsbury and Wenlock, having been founded so soon after the Conquest, are typical examples fitting into the high point of the Benedictine and Cluniac rule, but Wigmore Abbey, despite the long-running fashion for Augustinian establishments, was founded after the period during which this order's new foundations were at their peak. According to Knowles and Hadcock (1971, 21) the majority of Augustinian houses were constructed between

1110 and 1160, whereas Wigmore's foundation stone was laid in 1172 (Ricketts, 2011, 1). By this time, other important orders such as the Cistercians and Grandmontines had come to prosperity in the country, but it seems that the Mortimers continued to loyally support the order that had been preferred by their ancestors rather than follow this new trend. This corresponds with the point made by Aston (2009, 96) that Augustine foundations depended largely on the familial interests and existing connections of the benefactor. The Mortimers' patronage of the Cistercian Abbey Cwmhir (Radnorshire) must also be remembered (although this was not on the same scale that they supported Wigmore); it was not uncommon for families to sponsor more than one religious order from the early 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, seemingly 'hedging their bets' in a spiritual sense as new orders surfaced (Cownie, 1998, 170-171). Patronage of religious houses depended strongly on individual preference, which itself was affected by previous allegiance to earlier foundations and fashions of the time (Green, 1997, 391-2). A balance of these two latter considerations would have to have been met as new orders came into play. It would have been interesting to see, had the Montgomerys continued to prosper in England, whether they would have switched allegiance to a different order owing to new fashions or royal connections, or continued to support the Benedictine and Cluniac monasteries that their family had been associated with.

Another similarity to note is that both the Montgomery and the Mortimer families used their monasteries for their own benefits. The religious history of both families has revealed that individuals entered their religious houses as monks, either in old age or as a career path. Roger de Montgomery took the monastic habit in Shrewsbury Abbey shortly before his death, and his daughter Emma became the abbess of the nunnery at Almenèches that her father had founded in the Séez area of Normandy (*Orderic Vitalis*, 195). The lords of Wigmore, including its original founder Hugh, were buried at the abbey there for hundreds of years, and we saw a member of the Mortimer family buried in Presteigne church, which was owned by Wigmore and patronised by the family. Roger de Montgomery and his successor to his earldom (Hugh) were both buried in Shrewsbury Abbey, and it can be expected that if the family had not been exiled the following generations would have had the same resting place. The founder and members of his immediate family were typically buried in highly prominent positions in the abbey church, such as in the choir or before the high altar (Coppack, 2006, 75). A perfect example of this is the resting

place of Roger de Montgomery, buried between the two altars of his new church upon his death in 1094 (Baker, 1998, 3). In addition to the status that being buried in a prominent monastery bestowed upon the deceased lord and his family, having a highly important figure of the aristocracy buried in the grounds could give the monastery a great deal of prestige too (Hicks, 2007, 145).

It is interesting that many of the highest status barons in the immediate post-Conquest period like Roger de Montgomery chose to be buried in their English foundations rather than their longer-established Norman ones; Hugh d'Avranches, Richard fitzGilbert and William de Warenne all requested that they be buried in their respective abbeys (Cownie, 1998, 192). Families who were expected to continue their ancestors' patronage of a monastery would also continue to be buried there, utilising the church as a form of 'dynastic mausoleum' (Pounds, 1990, 232), as was the case at Wigmore. Hugh (II) Mortimer, the original benefactor of Wigmore Abbey, was the first of 11 members of the family buried within the abbey church itself, although the exact locations within its ruins are unknown.

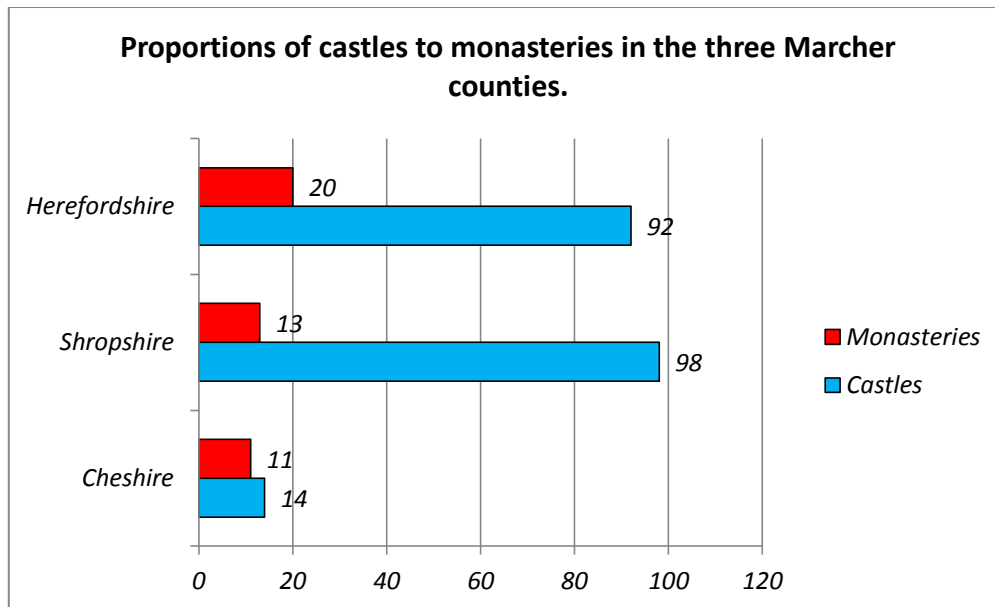
As demonstrated by their foundations at Wigmore and Bridgnorth (and the latter's previous location at Quatford), the Mortimer and the Montgomery families both had direct links to collegiate foundations. Both families' colleges were founded in a similar time period at the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century, but at very different times in their own family histories. Whilst the Montgomery family were already major figures by this point, and had already founded two-large scale monasteries, the Mortimers were still nowhere near the peak of their wealth and influence. It is likely that the latter family chose to establish a college as a more financially viable ecclesiastical establishment to gain them spiritual support and status, founding their abbey much later when they had better resources to do so. In the case of the Montgomerys, their foundation was in Earl Roger's new borough at Quatford, later being moved by his successor to within Bridgnorth castle, so it is probable that the college had the original purpose of serving the needs of the settlement and lordly residence. Collegiate canons tended to be connected (by varying degrees) to the service of the patron's own chapel and household, and also frequently to his administrative needs (Pounds, 1990, 223), so the foundation of a college served a number of practical needs of a lord in addition to spiritual and social benefits.

## **7.2 - Proximity of major abbeys and castles.**

An important issue arising from the case studies is the placing of newly founded monasteries alongside baronial castles. Both Wigmore and Shrewsbury abbey sites are visible from their respective founders' residences (at Wigmore from the keep and Shrewsbury from the castle walls), which was a common occurrence in the medieval period (see Thompson, 1986). Whilst there are a number of possible reasons behind this spatial link, including those of a social and practical nature, it must be remembered that religion played a massive role in medieval life and personal piety and the desire to be close to a place of spiritual salvation will therefore have been a highly important factor in the placement of a monastery near to the home of a lord.

Reasons linked to enhancing and proclaiming social status are important in this proximity between a castle and a monastery. Hansson (2006, 178-9) points out that having a church (or in this case a monastery) located alongside a lord's residence could go further than simply displaying his piety. It also demonstrated the 'divine sanction of the social position' that he enjoyed. In the Welsh Marches, a contested border area, this could have been a particularly important factor, helping to enhance the standing of the new elite in the eyes of the local population (and perhaps rival lords), especially in the case of Shrewsbury during Roger de Montgomery's imposition of power so soon after the Norman Conquest. Being able to view both the castle and monastery in the same landscape could presumably also further emphasise the conspicuous display of wealth, piety and power that was involved in the foundation of a monastery.

Another obvious display of the social standing of a founder of a monastery was obviously the huge cost involved, and Thompson (1986, 305) makes the point that not every castle lord could afford to found a large establishment, stating that monastic foundations were 'an act of piety considered desirable by many but achieved by few'. This is supported by the maps in chapter 4 of this project, which show the much higher proportion of castles than monastic sites in the border area, meaning that few castle lords had the means to found a new religious house (Fig.7.1). Therefore the situation on the border mirrors that of the rest of England in the years immediately following 1066 in that the first wave of foundations were carried out by the richest members of society (Cownie, 1998, 168).

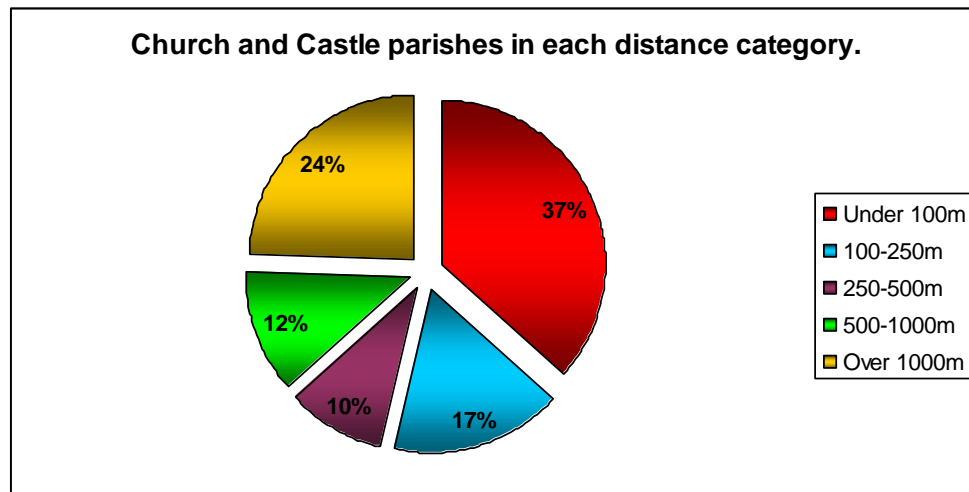


*Fig.7.1: The proportions of castles to monasteries located within the counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire. Herefordshire and Shropshire in particular demonstrate the small number of religious houses compared to the number of castles, implying that only the richest residents of these castles had the means to found a monastic site (note that this chart does not include the friaries and Knights Templar or Hospitaller establishments in the three counties, as these have not been a focus of this thesis) (Source: author's own, 2012).*

A similar religious spatial connection is more frequently seen with churches and chapels (Fig.7.2) than monasteries (see Hollinghurst, 2011), pointing to the idea that founding or patronising a church was a more affordable alternative for those slightly further down the scale of elite standings than people such as the Montgomery and Mortimer families. For example, the de Lacy family from Longtown Castle (also known as Ewyas Lacy) in Herefordshire founded a chapel of ease adjacent to their residence in the 13<sup>th</sup>-century (Hollinghurst, 2011), thus connecting themselves to the religious lives of their community and creating a monument in a similar (although more affordable and less conspicuous) way to those baronial figures founding major monasteries. The theory that the foundation of a church alongside a castle (rather than a monastery) was a more cost-effective way of achieving the same kind of spiritual gains is supported by a comparison of the maps in chapter 4 of this project, which shows that, in the areas of Herefordshire and Shropshire where many castles had close spatial links with churches (Fig.4.5), there were few instances of monasteries also



being situated in that area; it therefore seems likely that these castle lords chose the more affordable alternative to display their piety and authority.



*Fig.7.2: The results from a survey of 40 castle sites in western Herefordshire that have a spatial relationship to a church, categorised by distance (as shown in the legend). Of these categories, the largest is the 'under 100m' group, showing the common occurrence of the location of churches directly adjacent to lordly residences (Source: author's own, 2011).*

At Wigmore, the Mortimers had connections to the parish church of St James, situated very near to the castle on the edge of the settlement, before their monastery was built. This will have enabled the Mortimer lords a high degree of control over the church, an institution that was an integral part of everybody's life. The proximity along with the lord's patronage of the church will have granted the Mortimers influence over a 'local microcosm' of the country (Hansson, 2006, 181), helping to emphasise their authority in the area that they controlled.

There were also several practical benefits to the adjacent siting of monasteries and castles. Monks, as part of a select group who were literate in the medieval period, were also useful for a castle lord for their skills in administrative, legal and financial matters (Creighton, 2002, 128). Another advantage was the religious role that members of a monastery could provide for churches and chapels in the locality. This was particularly the case with Augustinian Canons such as those at Wigmore Abbey, because these monastic residents were additionally ordained priests and therefore qualified to hold church services in the parish (Leonard, 2000, 83). This provided the

lord of the castle with a direct influence over the staffing of the parish church, as members of his monastic community could now be responsible for the religious proceedings of the parish in addition to his abbey. This will have ensured that his authority over religious matters was demonstrated to a far wider audience (the entire congregation of the parish) than could be displayed by a connection with a monastery to which the majority of the population would not have had access. It is also clear from sites such as Shrewsbury Abbey where there is evidence for guesthouses that accommodating visitors was important in a monastery. This could also be useful for the lord of an adjacent castle who, with his influence over the foundation, would be able to use the monastery as additional accommodation for parties of guests (Creighton, 2002, 128).

### **7.3 - Fishponds.**

Fishponds are a feature common to all four of the abbeys studied in the case studies of the sites patronised by the Mortimer and Montgomery families, although there are very limited remains so the scale and location of these have often proved difficult to determine. The majority of medieval monastic sites seem to have owned at least one pond for the purposes of fish production (many had multiple examples), which could either be located within the monastic precinct itself or on the outlying estates under their control (Aston, 2009, 143). Although there was a certain degree of variation between different orders (and the rules in any case tended to become less closely adhered to over time), the restrictions on meat-eating for the inhabitants of a monastery meant that access to fish as an alternative foodstuff was important (Greene, 1992, 124). It seems however that sustaining the monastic community was not the only purpose of this feature; recent castle studies have shown these features to have status and aesthetic implications in addition to their practical purposes (see Liddiard, 2005; Creighton, 2009), and it seems likely that, as a similarly high status establishment in many respects, the same theories could be applied for monastic fisheries. It must be stressed though that functionality and status were not mutually exclusive here, but could both apply to the same feature.

The main functional purpose of a fishpond is obvious, but the physical shape and size of the feature, and whether there was a single pool or a complex consisting of several, can give us a more detailed insight into exactly what it was used for. It is however not easy in many cases to find sufficient archaeological evidence to

determine the whole story with regard to dimensions, and dating the earthwork remains is also a very difficult task. Generally larger ponds (known as the *vivarium*) were used for breeding purposes, and smaller ponds (the *servatorium*) were for holding the fish shortly before they were used, and were frequently located much closer to the place of residence due to this purpose (Creighton, 2009, 114-5). Presumably locating the fish so close to the place where they were to be consumed ensured that they would be fresh. Perhaps Shrewsbury Abbey's former ponds, situated just to the south of the main buildings of the monastery, or Wigmore's, located 120m away from the abbey itself, served such a purpose. Ponds belonging to religious houses match those belonging to lay estates in that there is a huge amount of variation in the form that they took, ranging from complex systems of multiple ponds where it was possible to breed and store a number of fish of assorted types, right down to insubstantial single ponds (Bond, 1988, 95).

Artificial fishponds were not the only way of acquiring this foodstuff though, as natural water sources such as rivers, lakes and the sea could be utilised by a monastery that happened to be situated in the vicinity. The river Severn provides a number of examples of evidence for fish weirs owned by various monasteries (see Pannet, 1988), yet we have seen that Shrewsbury Abbey, despite being ideally located on the banks of the river, still constructed two artificial ponds on their grounds to use in addition to this source. This is likely to have been because, while a convenient source in many respects, a river was still a natural supply and therefore likely to be inconsistent with regard to both the type and number of fish available (Bond, 1988, 92). A purpose built pond on the other hand could provide the type of fish desired and a guaranteed supply, so is therefore a useful alternative where viable. It may also have provided a form of investment. It seems that, owing to the size of some pond complexes on sites belonging to the Cistercian, Augustinian and Premonstratensian orders that many fishponds might have served not only to sustain the monastic community, but also to produce fish on a commercial scale (although it must be noted that there is a lack of evidence from documentary sources to support this idea) (Bond, 1988, 104).

But were the fishponds possessed by religious houses purely functional, or did they, like those shown by recent landscape studies owned by castle lords, have further purposes related to status and visual appeal? Fishponds tended only to be controlled as private resources by the higher ranked sect of society (including royalty, manorial

lords and monastic houses), owing to the fact that the high cost of large-scale freshwater fish production meant that only the wealthy had the means necessary to carry out such an expensive activity (Creighton, 2009, 114-5). Because of this, the ponds in which the fish were kept are naturally assumed to have connections with lordship and status. Added to this, there is frequently further proof of this link to elitism given by the names of fishponds, such as ‘Earl’s Pool’ (as occurs at Castle Acre, Norfolk) or, in the case of a feature associated with a monastery, ‘Abbot’s Pond’ (Liddiard, 2005, 107). We have seen an example of this at Shrewsbury Abbey, where the First Edition Ordnance Survey map provides evidence of a former feature called ‘Abbots Pool’.

Water features such as lakes and ponds are today still considered desirable for their aesthetic appearance. It is therefore easy to assume that this appeal, in addition to their practical uses, may well have been a consideration for those people involved in their creation in the medieval period too. Creighton (2009, 115) describes the effect that water could have on the visual appearance of buildings, and gives examples of the use of ponds to offset the appearance of castle architecture at, for example, Hopton castle in Shropshire. If the addition of water features adjacent to a baronial residence can have such an impact on the appearance of these buildings, it is logical to conclude that the same can be said for ponds and lakes situated alongside the impressive architecture of an abbey.

A final consideration to include is the religious symbolism of water features such as ponds and lakes. As Liddiard (2005, 110) points out, Christ himself was a ‘Fisher of Men’, and water is obviously vital for the survival of all forms of life. Ponds, moats and lakes, alongside their other functions, could well symbolise aspects of religious imagery like this, and could provide another reason why they occurred so frequently at medieval religious houses. As we have seen throughout this project that piety was hugely important to the Norman barony, this symbolism may well have applied to castle lords to as an additional way of connecting themselves to their religion.

#### **7.4 - Parks.**

Another feature possessed by several of the case study sites is the monastic park. Deer parks were prominent displays of elite status across Europe from the medieval period and beyond (Liddiard, 2000, 51). Many religious houses owned

several of these assets (Glastonbury Abbey for instance owned 7), and zooarchaeology from sites sometimes gives evidence for venison featuring in the diet of the monastic community (Creighton, 2009, 127). They could be located directly alongside the monastery, as at Abbey Cwmhir, or on the monastery's outlying estates, such as Shrewsbury's park at Lythwood. Parks were multifunctional features, used for rearing not only deer but also other animals, enclosing valuable resources belonging to the abbey such as fishponds, in addition to entertainment purposes including hunting. There are also implications of very high social standing connected to the ownership of parks, not least the cost of obtaining and enclosing the land in question, and for the upkeep of the park boundary, which ensured that only those from or above an affluent gentry family could afford them (Liddiard, 2007, 3). Archaeological evidence for deer parks can include earthworks of park pales, boundaries of parishes and property, place-names and the positioning of roads (Creighton, 2002, 118).

In terms of practical uses, deer parks were used much more for the rearing and management of deer than for hunting, with their high status stemming instead from the production of venison (consumed only by the elite) which took place there, and from the high cost (and relatively little economic return) of emparkment (Liddiard, 2000, 51). Parks were usually surrounded by a pale, a large earthwork barrier topped by some form of fence, wall or hedge and flanked by ditches (Cantor, 1983, 3). The most important function of a park was to provide an environment (usually an expanse of 'semi-wild wood' landscape) for fallow deer to be enclosed prior to their purpose as a foodstuff (Bond, 2004, 176). Parks were also a useful supplier of resources including wood (used as both a building material and as fuel), with many parks containing separate sections of different woodland species (Moorhouse, 2007, 111). They frequently also contained stone for mining (such as we saw at the park adjacent to Abbey Cwmhir), in addition to the extra meat source provided by rabbits and fish from ponds where they were located within the enclosure (Cantor, 1984, 3). A similar Cistercian site at nearby Strata Florida, which has been the focus of a recent study run by David Austin, the land owned by and adjacent to the abbey precinct is known to have been managed for the agricultural produce of a variety of animals including pigs, horses, dairy and oxen, in addition to arable practices and hay production (Austin, 2007, 16).

It is important not to forget about the functions connected to hunting in a park, but this is going to be discussed as a status aspect rather than a practical use here.

Cantor (1984, 3) states that Norman barons and kings were responsible for the development of deer parks because they grew out of the nobility's passion for the sport of hunting. The activity itself was a 'ritualised display of violence' that helped to enhance the identity of high status figures throughout Europe in the medieval period (Creighton, 2009, 122). It is therefore no wonder that the deer park is associated with high status, but, as monks themselves were forbidden to hunt, why did they feature so heavily in monastic property? It is partly to do with the aforementioned practical uses, but also due to the fact that one of the major roles of a monastery was to provide accommodation for guests. Hunting was also associated with hospitality as a form of entertainment put on by the higher classes (Liddiard, 2005, 105), and therefore a landscape with a space for this activity such as a deer park would be a useful feature for a monastery to possess when housing elite visitors despite the monks themselves being forbidden to hunt. This is particularly well demonstrated at Abbey Cwmhir, where in 1241 Roger (II) Mortimer enclosed the great expanse of land on the slopes above the monastery with the permission of the abbot for the purposes of hunting. As his residence was at Wigmore, it seems that Mortimer and his guests would only have used the park for hunting expeditions when staying at the abbey.

It is logical to conclude that the bigger the park owned by an institution of prestige, the higher the status that the feature conveyed. This is obviously closely linked to the expenditure necessary for larger enclosures, both in the acquisition of land and the upkeep of park pales which could be incredibly costly (Bond, 2004, 177), meaning that the owner needed substantial wealth in order to possess this landscape element. Usually parks began as fairly insubstantial areas of demesne woodland, but were expanded in the subsequent centuries depending on the amount of funding available (Cantor, 1984, 3). The social standing necessary for ownership of a deer park is further shown by the fact that royal permission (theoretically) had to be obtained in order to enclose land to keep deer, as these animals all belonged to the king (Bond, 2004, 176). Cantor (1984, 3) however suggests that it was only necessary for royal permission to be granted to those sites either inside or adjacent to a royal forest, and those that principally kept fallow deer (red deer were also frequently stocked). Whichever the case, Much Wenlock is known to have failed to obtain a licence to empark land at Oxenbold (Shropshire), which cost them £200 in fines in 1251 (Bond, 2004, 176).

Like several aspects of monastic landscapes, the study of parks owned by religious houses seems not as yet to have attracted a wealth of research, and therefore many of the considerations made here about their functions are sourced from publications on those attached to castles. But to what extent do monastic parks differ from their secular counterparts? In order to reach a satisfactory conclusion on the subject, a great deal more detailed consideration is necessary than can be undertaken within the confines of this project. The major difference is of course that secular owners would use their parkland for hunting, but monks were not permitted to partake in this activity. However, the case studies in this project have proved that in areas such as the rearing of animals and the sourcing of timber and stone as building material, secular and monastic parks seem to have had very similar functions.

### **7.5 - Gardens.**

Whilst monastic gardens are not readily apparent in the archaeological record for most of the case studies considered in this project, it is important to note that this was a highly common feature for a religious house, and the lack of evidence pertaining to them does not necessarily point to their absence in the medieval period. Indeed, every site discussed is likely to have possessed at least one such feature, probably more. Many components of the garden are somewhat elusive to the archaeologist owing to their rather ephemeral nature (for example, plant beds and shallow ponds leave behind little evidence in the landscape), and in any case have not been studied until recently as the importance of garden sites was not altogether realised by early archaeologists (Creighton, 2009, 29). Despite the lack of physical evidence, we know from documentary sources that monastic gardens could be used for food and medicinal produce, study, contemplation, privacy and even burial (Landsberg, 1995, 34). There is however far less emphasis on display in an episcopal garden than a secular one (as will be discussed here), so perhaps cannot be compared so closely as some of the other features common to both monasteries and baronial residences.

At Shrewsbury it is thought that there were gardens located in the area of the precinct to the east of the abbey church (like much of this site, there is no trace of them today due to subsequent building work), and it may have been that, judging by its situation, this was a feature known as a ‘paradise’, which was enclosed for the purposes of meditation and prayer for the monastic community (McLean, 1981, 18).

Benedictine monasteries in particular (along with other early orders) necessitated the enclosing of garden spaces within the monastic precinct for the 'solace and sustenance of the monks', so could be for the use of the kitchen or the infirmary, or simply for ornamental purposes (Bond, 2004, 153). There are gardens of a more modern date at Much Wenlock, which are visible from that aerial photograph in the case study (Fig.11) and which could possibly have been constructed over old monastic gardens within the precinct as this was an open area that appears not have contained any form of buildings. Interestingly, the modern garden seems to take the form of a cloister garth, despite being located just to the south of this actual feature here. The cloister garden or garth (enclosed for the purposes of 'peace and repose') was always located immediately south of the church, was square in shape and usually divided into four by crossed paths, and incorporated a water feature somewhere within it (McLean, 1981, 16). This water feature, in this case a *lavitorium*, is still visible in the cloister of Much Wenlock. It is likely to have been within the cloister garth at Shrewsbury Abbey that Hugh de Montgomery was buried in 1098, as Orderic tells us that he was laid in the abbey cloister. Whilst there is no evidence at either Wigmore or Abbey Cwmhir for medieval gardens (the evidence for the precinct of both is rather fragmented), they will at the very least have possessed a cloister garth, if not several additional garden areas.

Almost without exception, monasteries owned at least one such feature (some, depending on the size, order and status, owned several), incorporating various elements for practical use and for enjoyment (Creighton, 2009, 48). Good examples of functional gardens include vegetable and herb gardens located adjacent to the monastery's kitchens or infirmary to help sustain the inhabitants (Greene, 1992, 11). Additionally, the religious connotations of the Garden of Eden that Liddiard (2005, 110) points out in the context of castle gardens is also likely to feature heavily in this monastic context. But what of the status implications that appear with the study of secular gardens? Like important residents of castles, prominent figures in a monastery such as the abbot often had their own private gardens (Landsberg, 1995, 41), implying that they were a similarly high status possession. Yet, as 'primarily inward-looking designed spaces', monastic gardens do not appear to have been intended for display purposes but for the almost sole use of the monastic inhabitants, with guests and other occasional visitors being the only others to enjoy them (Creighton, 2009, 49).



## **Chapter 8 - Conclusions.**

The aim for this project was to consider patterns of Anglo-Norman religious patronage in the Welsh Marches, with particular emphasis on the social context of benefactions and their impacts upon the landscape. The first objective was to produce county-wide studies of castles and monasteries in Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire using ArcGIS. These maps produced promising results, particularly with regard to the distribution of castles and monasteries throughout the border area. Shropshire and Herefordshire show a far higher number of castle sites than Cheshire, with the densest concentration of these sites occurring in the area closest to the border with Wales. With regard to the location of monastic sites, the highest density appears mainly in major river valleys such as the Wye and the Severn, and multiple sites appear in all three of the focal settlements of the earldom. Other data in this chapter made considerations about the form and social status of castles, along with the dates and religious order of monasteries founded by their lords. The relationship (in terms of proximity) of castles and parish churches was also studied, showing that many castle lords had connections with other ecclesiastical sites in addition to monastic houses. However, an issue with this level of analysis is that the conclusions that can be drawn from maps tend to be very broad (as information has to be grouped into categories sometimes covering a wide range of, for example, dates or structural styles), so it is difficult for the finer details included within sites to be taken into account here. Nonetheless, this exercise provided a platform for a second phase of data collection and analysis.

The next objective was to consider the patronage of castle lords in more detail by looking closely at the religious connections of two aristocratic families in the Marches: the Mortimers of Wigmore and the Montgomerys of Shrewsbury. This was achieved by developing a narrative of the families' history, followed by a consideration on their overall religious patronage which took into account their links to monasteries in Normandy as well as in England. Case studies of individual religious sites (including churches in addition to monasteries) in the Anglo-Welsh Marches that were supported by each family were then researched in detail to link the history with the archaeological record, also taking into account the overall monastic landscape within which they were located. This enabled findings to be linked in to the

wider academic debate concerning the ways in which castle lords used religious sites not only to display their piety but also to illustrate their wealth and status.

Major findings included the realisation that many of the families' monastic sites were located in the areas around their major baronial centre. Both the Mortimers and the Montgomerys located several sites in the vicinity of Wigmore and Shrewsbury respectively rather than situating major establishments in other areas of England where they also owned land. For example, we saw that although Roger de Montgomery owned a large portion of Sussex, he chose to locate Shrewsbury Abbey, Much Wenlock Priory and Quatford church near to his *caput* in Shrewsbury, using his more distant property in southern England to grant to the Norman sites that he supported. Also, it is clear that both families founded their largest and most important monastic sites adjacent to their castle so that their piety and generosity was highly conspicuous. However, it must be remembered that the nearby presence of a monastery will have had more functional features in addition to bringing the associated castle lord enhanced prestige. The practicality of having literate monks or priests in the local area was clear in that they were able to serve the castle's administrative and monetary needs, and they could also serve the private chapel. Monasteries were also used for accommodation purposes, and we have seen (with the Mortimers at Abbey Cwmhir) the enclosure of parkland for the use of the castle lord and his guests. Therefore it can be concluded from the evidence in these case studies that the roles of status, piety and functionality in religious sites were intertwined rather than being mutually exclusive.

Other findings from the case studies, which generally conform to previous theories about the religious patronage of castle lords, include the ways in which future generations of a founding family continued to use the monastery. Gifts from the Mortimer lords continued to be given to the site founded by their ancestor at Wigmore, and members of this branch of the family continued to be buried in the abbey church for several hundred years. The only two Earls of Shrewsbury to die in the period that the Montgomery family was influential in England were also buried within their own foundation, and it is most likely that this practice would have continued if they had not fallen from power in 1102 as being laid to rest in a conspicuous monastery with obvious connections to the family displayed great prestige. Both families also typically had members who took the monastic habit within their establishments, including Hugh (II) Mortimer at Wigmore Abbey, Roger

de Montgomery at Shrewsbury and his daughter Emma at the Norman nunnery at Almenèches.

The discussion of features of the wider monastic landscape highlights essentially similar functional and social implications to secular castle landscapes. There is a limited selection of research looking at the high status connotations of the monastic landscape. Scholars such as Aston and Bond have laid important foundations in this regard, but it is rarely the focus of any concentrated study, whereas authors such as Cownie give detailed descriptions on the ways in which a monastery could benefit its founder in a social sense, yet do not connect these arguments to evidence from the wider landscape. This project has aimed to combine the two areas of research. There is the additional issue that archaeological studies of monastic sites (similarly to castles) have historically concentrated on the main buildings of the complex rather than the landscape within which they were situated. As both castles and monasteries were high status establishments of the medieval world, and they shared similar landscape features, it makes sense to apply similar theories to their study. But can conclusions concerning designed landscapes of castles be fully applied to the monastic context? There are some exceptions, such as the monastic garden; these tended not to be aimed for display purposes (as was the case with those within a castle landscape), instead being only for the use of the monastery's inhabitants, or for practical reasons such as herb and vegetable production. There is also a difference with deer parks belonging to a monastery in that monks were not allowed to use it for hunting purposes, which would have been one of the important functions of a secular park. Future studies may reveal ways in which ecclesiastical parks were distinctive from the secular counterparts topographically, functionally and visually, although at present we can only speculate on these matters. When comparing features at both types of site, it seems that the same form of arguments related to function and status of assets such as fishponds and deer parks belonging to castles can also be used for monasteries. Indeed, sometimes the features overlap, for example in the use of monastic parks for hunting purposes. Therefore it can be concluded that castles and monasteries were not only connected by religious patronage, but by the features they possessed.

**Further Research.**

There are several ways in which the issues considered in this project could be extended in further research. The study of the religious patronage of other Anglo-Norman families in the Marches region, in the same way that the Mortimers and Montgomerys were studied here, would give a wider range of results from which to draw conclusions about the ecclesiastical connections of castle lords. These families could be from the northern or southern border region to give a greater spread of evidence to use, as the baronial centres of both of the families studied already undertaken were located in the central Marches area. The project could be extended to consider the patronage of these families on the Welsh side of the border in addition to the English, and could also be compared with the religious connections of the Welsh nobility, for example at sites such as Strata Florida. An promising study to undertake would be to compare the results of patronage in the Anglo-Welsh Marches with that of a similar border region, for example the Anglo-Scottish border or The Pale in Ireland. It would also be useful to be able to put more emphasis on comparing sites supported by castle lords in England to sites in Normandy. This has been touched on in this project, but, due to the limited resources currently available giving detail on the sites that were patronised in Normandy, this would need much more original research to be undertaken than the scope of this thesis has allowed.

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