

## CHAPTER IV

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By Barbara Yorke, with a contribution by Philip Sidebottom

#### THE ROMAN PERIOD (by P.S.)

The exact nature of society in this part of England in the immediate post-Roman period is largely unknown, earning it its popular nomenclature of the 'Dark Ages'. Indeed, any continuity of sites from the Roman period into the post-Roman is poorly understood. It is likely that a Roman style of local government survived in one form or another in certain parts after the collapse of the Roman economy and withdrawal of the military in the early fifth century, but to what extent and where, is unknown. Nevertheless, the Roman legacy and its influence on the production of stone sculpture and monuments in the Anglo-Saxon period can be seen to take several forms. It is true to say that late Roman art and architecture were certainly adopted into the repertoire of Anglo-Saxon design elements in Derbyshire and Staffordshire, as elsewhere, while Roman communication routes continued through the Anglo-Saxon period and beyond, and the use of monumental stone certainly had a direct impact on later church builders and for purposes of display. Former Roman estates may also have survived into the post-Roman period, and the minerals, mined and quarried throughout the Roman period, became increasingly important to their Anglo-Saxon successors.

The area considered here—the later counties of Staffordshire and Derbyshire—appears to have been part of the region known as *Britannia Secunda* by the third century (Higham 1993, 50), an area where militarisation took precedence over urbanisation. This apparent character perhaps explains why contemporary documentation is generally lacking for the region (cf. Wardle 2002, 2; Taylor 2006, 143). Nevertheless, although we know little about Roman-period tribal boundaries, contemporary sources do suggest that the very northern parts of the counties of Derbyshire and Staffordshire may have been included in the territorial jurisdiction of the Brigantes (Dearne 1990, 22; Wardle

2002, 3), a tribal unit that was particularly resistant to Roman advances in Britain and so contributed to the accentuated military tensions in northern England. Dearne (1990, 23) has also argued that most of Derbyshire to the south was within the territory of the Cornovi which extended through Staffordshire, although the Coritani appear to have held some territory in the east of the region (Hart 1981, 81). These were, however, Roman administrative tribal units and may have included smaller groups of which we know nothing. To what extent they influenced post-Roman divisions, those expressed in the *Tribal Hidage*, for example, is unknown, but it is likely that when the Roman administration collapsed some reversion to tribalism was inevitable.

Our knowledge of the Roman principal centres in the region is variable (Fig. 13). Some, like the fort and *vicus* at Little Chester (*Derventio*) in Derby, were swallowed up by the expansion of the town with the inevitable loss of valuable archaeological information. Conversely, forts like that at Brough-on-Noe (*Navio*) in Derbyshire escaped almost unscathed to become a 'green-field' monument. In Derbyshire, the principal military foci in the north were the forts at Melandra (*Ardotalia*), near Glossop, and Brough-on-Noe, near Hope, with Chesterfield, Pentrich and Derby (*Derventio*) in the south. Fortlets are now known at Sawley on the River Trent (Dearne 1990, 22) and Highstones, just north of Melandra (Taylor 2006, 141). In Staffordshire, forts existed at Chesterton, near Stoke-on-Trent, Rocester, Penkridge (*Pennocrucium*), Greensforge (south of Wolverhampton) and at Wall (*Letocetum*) on Watling Street. Fortlets have also been identified at Holly Wood (east of Stone) and Barrow Hill, to the north of Rocester (Wardle 2002, 7–8). Excavations at Carsington in Derbyshire also suggest that a fort, villa or major settlement existed there (Dearne 1990, 99; Taylor 2006, 144). Most of the forts had *vici* attached to them, some developing into

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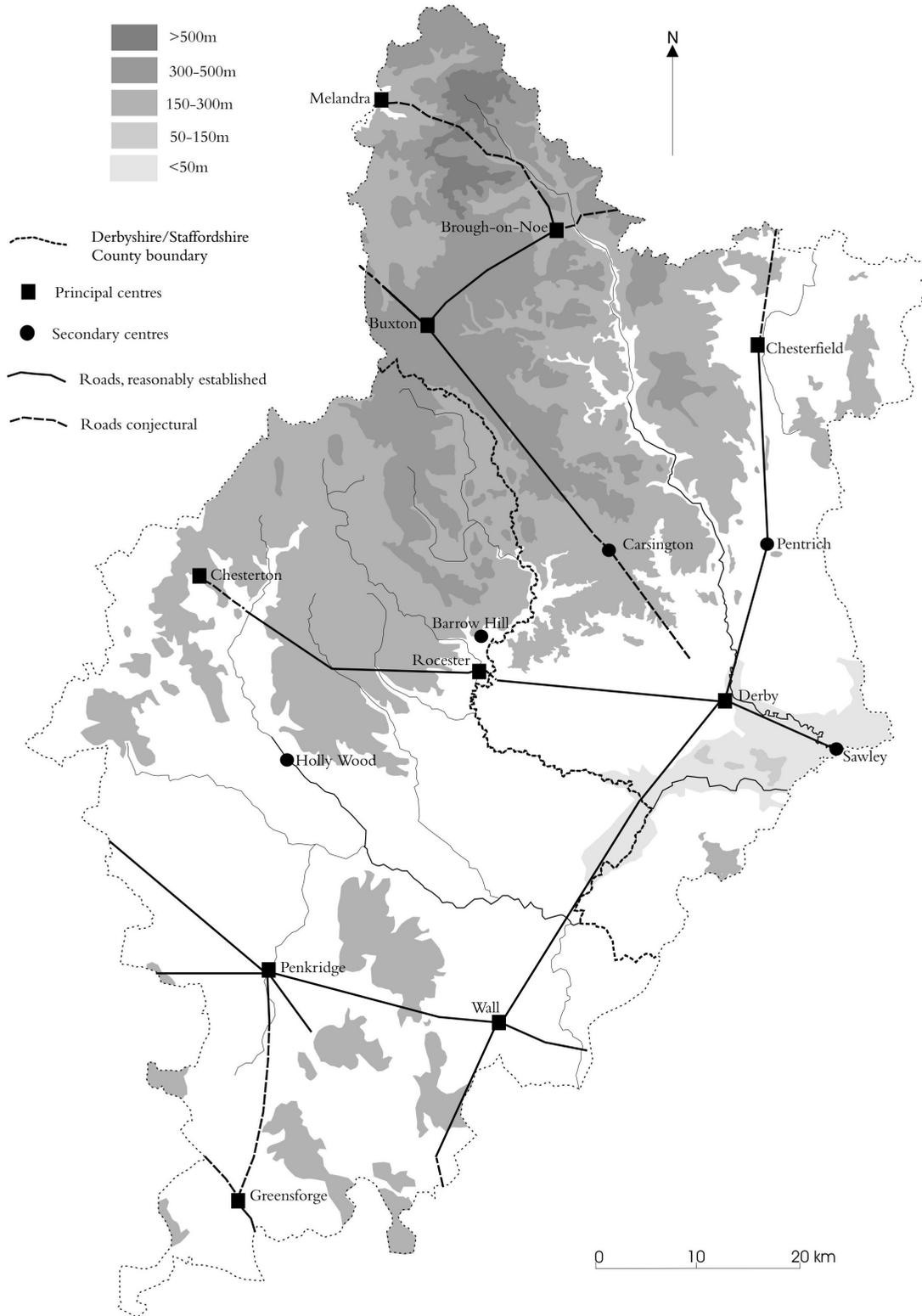


FIGURE 13  
Roman road systems and sites in Derbyshire and Staffordshire

civilian centres that outlived the garrisons (Dearne 1990, 96–113). One major centre in the region was that at Buxton (*Arnemetia*), a focal point in the road network, but little is known about it. It is thought that a fort existed there, a spa (one of only two known sites in the country) and possibly a relatively large civilian settlement which appears to have continued until the late fourth or early fifth century (Taylor 2006, 160–1). The principal sites, like Buxton, on which the road system was focussed, or which were close to major route crossings, were probably those that had the most enduring influence in that they would have been both accessible and strategic. In this respect, Derby, Wall, Penkriddle, Buxton and, to some extent, Brough-on-Noe, appear to have remained as foci in some form or another after the collapse of the Roman economy.

Roman communication routes, especially the principal road system, also continued through the Anglo-Saxon period where the Old English *stræt* (street, road, high road, paved road, town-road) was frequently used to denote a Roman highway. In this region, as elsewhere, Roman military roads have long been the subject of scholarly research (cf. Margary 1973) but lesser trackways and pre-existing routes undoubtedly also played an equally important role (Dearne 1990, 60). Two major routes were included in the region: Ryknield Street, which ran through Wall, Derby and Chesterfield into Yorkshire; and Watling Street, which ran through the south of the region from Colchester to Wroxeter (Wardle 2002, 5–6), passing through Wall and Penkriddle (Fig. 13). Perhaps of lesser importance, but no doubt of significance in the locality, were several roads linking forts and fortlets. One travelled westwards from Derby, through Rocester and Chesterton and onwards to Cheshire and beyond, part of which was known as King Street (ibid, 6). Another, from Derby, crossed the spine of the Peak District to Buxton, while another from Buxton, travelled southwards through Leek, after which its course is poorly defined. From Derby, a road also extended to the River Trent at Sawley which most likely linked the local road system with riverine transport to the Humber (Taylor 2006, 148). In the south it seems a road travelled north-west from Penkriddle towards Chester (*Deva*) and another cut southwards to join the network in the south Midlands. In the north of Derbyshire routes linked Brough-on-Noe with southern Yorkshire to the east, to Melandra to the north-west and Buxton to the south-west (ibid.). It seems that the general east-west orientation of roads in northern Derbyshire were in part intended to seal off the southern Pennines from the north, if needs be.

Urban settlement during the Roman period appears

to have been largely confined to the vicinities of the more major Roman forts, such as Derby, Wall, Penkriddle or Buxton (Wardle 2002, 12–18; Dearne 1990, 53), while rural settlement seems to have been ubiquitous throughout the region. There is, however, a distinct division between the uplands and lowlands. The north of Derbyshire and Staffordshire lie in the southern Pennines, where the remains of several settlements of the Roman period survive, especially on the margins of more recent agriculture. In the lowlands of southern Derbyshire and perhaps the greater part of Staffordshire, around the Trent, Tame and Penk corridors, settlement has been identified from artefact scatters and sub-surface remains identified from aerial photography (cf. Wardle 2002; Taylor 2006). Taylor's analysis of settlements in the east of the region shows that the upland settlements were less 'Romanised' than those in the lowlands where structures resembled a more 'villa-style' of rural settlement (Taylor 2006, 145; see also Barnatt and Smith 1997). Dearne remarks that of the seven known villa sites in the region, all lie in the lowland areas (1990, 18). In the Coal Measures of eastern Derbyshire the lack of identified Roman sites is being addressed through the recent discovery of artefacts by means of field walking, aerial photography and excavation (Taylor 2006, 143), but it is clear that more sites remain undiscovered. Aerial photography and developer-funded excavations again continue to reveal more lowland sites (Wardle 2002; Taylor 2006), and Dearne speculates that other major Roman settlements may have existed in the uplands, including one in the vicinity of Eyam in Derbyshire (1990, 52). After the collapse of the Roman economy and military withdrawal it is likely that the large rural estates became the focus of settlement, economics and power, and what remained of the military probably focussed attention on their survival (Higham 1993, 55). To what extent the Roman rural estates evolved into those with Anglo-Saxon landlords is not clear, but it is likely that many of the 'multiple estates' identified from the Saxon period had their origins in the Roman period.

The Roman economy no doubt exploited the relatively rich agricultural resources of the large estates based on villa-style arrangement in the lowland areas of Staffordshire and southern Derbyshire (Taylor 2006, 145). However, in the north an important re-source was found in the lead-bearing limestone of the so-called White Peak. Lead ingots—'pigs'—have been discovered on the banks of the Humber and as far afield as the south coast (Hodges 1991, 73), many of which bear the name *Lutudarum*, taken to be a place, region or consortium in the Derbyshire

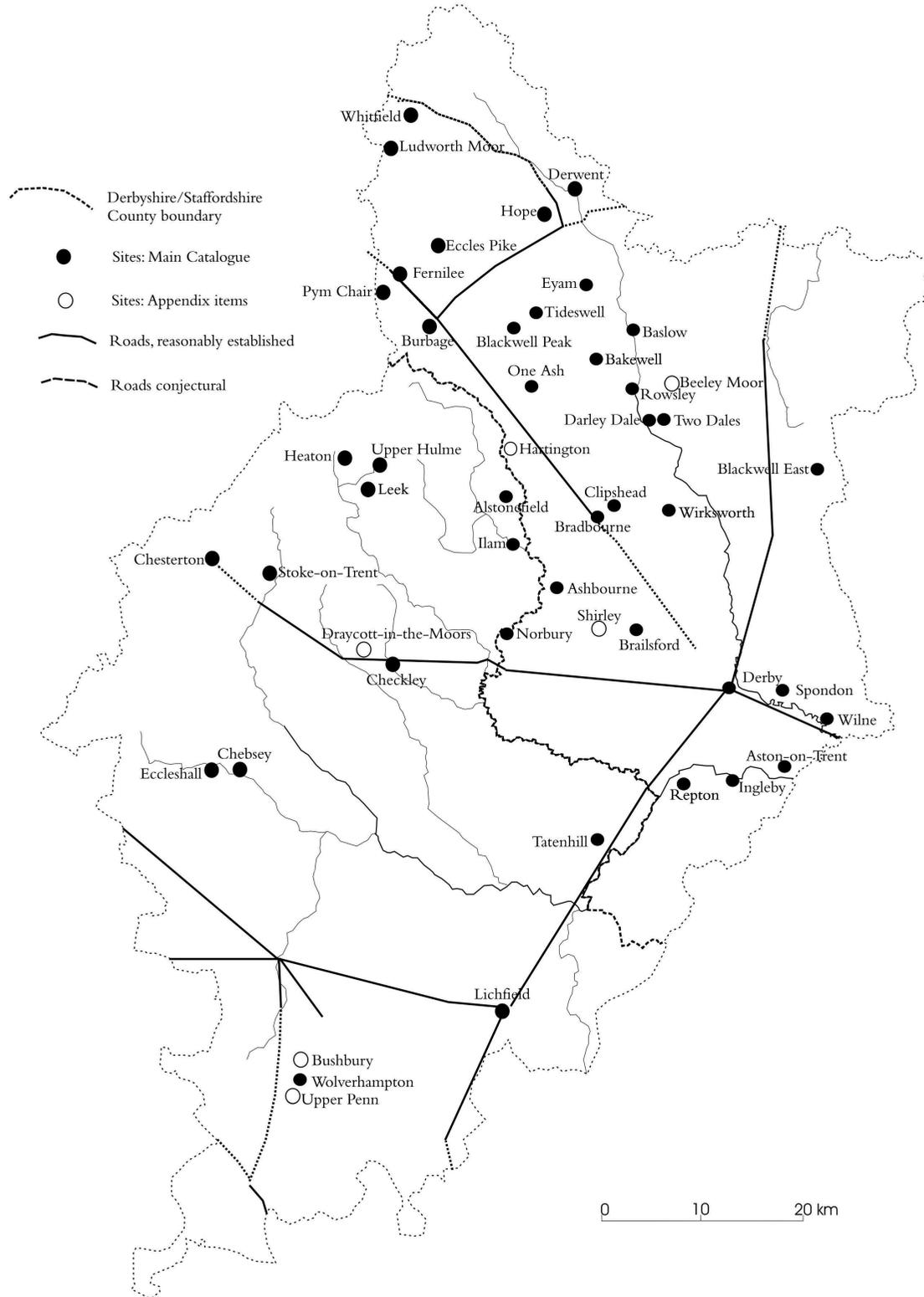


FIGURE 14 Sites with Anglo-Saxon sculpture in relation to the Roman road system

Peak District (Taylor 2006, 152). It is likely that the fort at Brough-on-Noe, in particular, was erected to safeguard Roman lead interests in the area as it lies to the immediate north of the lead-bearing rock and close to the southern boundary of the Brigantes, an area remaining militarised for much of the Roman period (Hart 1981, 83). Silver was also found in Peak District lead, and mining for that mineral, alongside lead, is highly plausible (Dearne 1990, 267). Wardle notes that, unlike other areas of the White Peak, there appears to have been little or no lead mining in the Staffordshire limestone region (2002, 20). No Roman-period mines have been identified, although it is likely that they continued to be exploited for centuries thereafter (Taylor 2006, 153).

Similar observations can be made about the identification of stone quarrying in the Roman period, although the use of local stone in the region is obvious from extant remains. As a general rule local stone was used by the Romans for building purposes when it was suitable (Blagg 1990). Whilst it is true that former Roman quarry sites would have been available to Anglo-Saxon masons, there was also material to be re-used from the buildings of former Roman villas, forts and other structures. Eaton has shown how widespread the reuse of Roman stone has been, especially in early ecclesiastical buildings (Eaton 2000). Identification of re-used Roman material is often through the survival of inscriptions, decoration, or constructional devices (cf. Stocker with Everson 1990) but re-dressed Roman material is much harder to identify. One must consider though, that if so much re-used Roman material found its way into early church fabric to what extent was it used in the production of Anglo-Saxon period sculpture, especially free-standing crosses? We know that at least one such monument, at Mirfield in west Yorkshire, appears to have been fashioned from a Roman altar (Coatsworth 2008, 214, ills. 546–51) and several of the round-shaft crosses, described here, may well have been Roman milestones or columns (see Chapter VII).

The Roman period left behind an infrastructure which, in many different ways, was useful to successive generations in the Anglo-Saxon period. Rural farms, especially in the agrarian lowlands, no doubt continued to provide much needed produce and are likely to have largely retained their territorial identity. Roman communication routes also continued to provide long distance roads allowing armies to move quickly across the landscape. Mineral exploitation may not have continued to the same extent in the early post-Roman period, but became increasingly important

as the larger Anglo-Saxon polities with wide-reaching connections, emerged.

## THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD (by B.Y.)

### POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

The counties of Derbyshire and Staffordshire were formed relatively late in the Anglo-Saxon period; the earliest reference to Staffordshire occurs in 1016 and to Derbyshire in 1048 (Molyneux 2015, 159. n. 186). Although the five hundreds of Staffordshire and the six wapentakes of Derbyshire may have incorporated earlier boundaries (Gelling 1992, 42–4; Roffe 1986b), the late Saxon shiring of the Midlands brought together some districts that had not been closely associated before and divided others. One of the most striking examples of the latter is that the boundary between Staffordshire and Warwickshire bisected the town of Tamworth and sundered the former territory of the *Tomsaetan* of which it had been a major centre (Gelling 1992, 146–53). *Tomsaetan* territory had extended into southern Derbyshire, and a ninth-century charter implies that Breedon-on-the-Hill was also in the province though by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period it had been placed in Leicestershire (Dornier 1977b).

The earliest archaeological evidence for an Anglo-Saxon presence in the two shires is cemeteries, of late fifth- or sixth-century date, which cluster in the Middle Trent valley (Brooks 1989, 161–2; Welch 2001, 148–55), and at the Roman site of Little Chester, now a north-eastern suburb of Derby (Spary-Green 2002). Also in the Trent valley area is the long-lived settlement of Catholme with its successive halls and sunken-featured buildings that were occupied from the sixth or seventh century up to the ninth century at least (Losco-Bradley and Kinsley 2002). The material evidence suggests links with Anglian areas to the east from which it is presumed these people had migrated. Other areas can be categorised by an absence of evidence for an Anglo-Saxon presence before the seventh century and by a survival of significant British place-names, and so are likely to have been controlled and occupied by the descendants of the people who had lived in the area in the Roman period (Gelling 1992, 59–62). They include the district of *Letocetum* whose first element was preserved in the Old English name for Lichfield as recorded by Bede (*Licidfelth/Lycitfeld*) (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 336 and 558; Gelling 1978, 100). The second element *-feld* may be an example of the application of this element to a British district when it came under Anglo-Saxon control (Lewis 2007). A

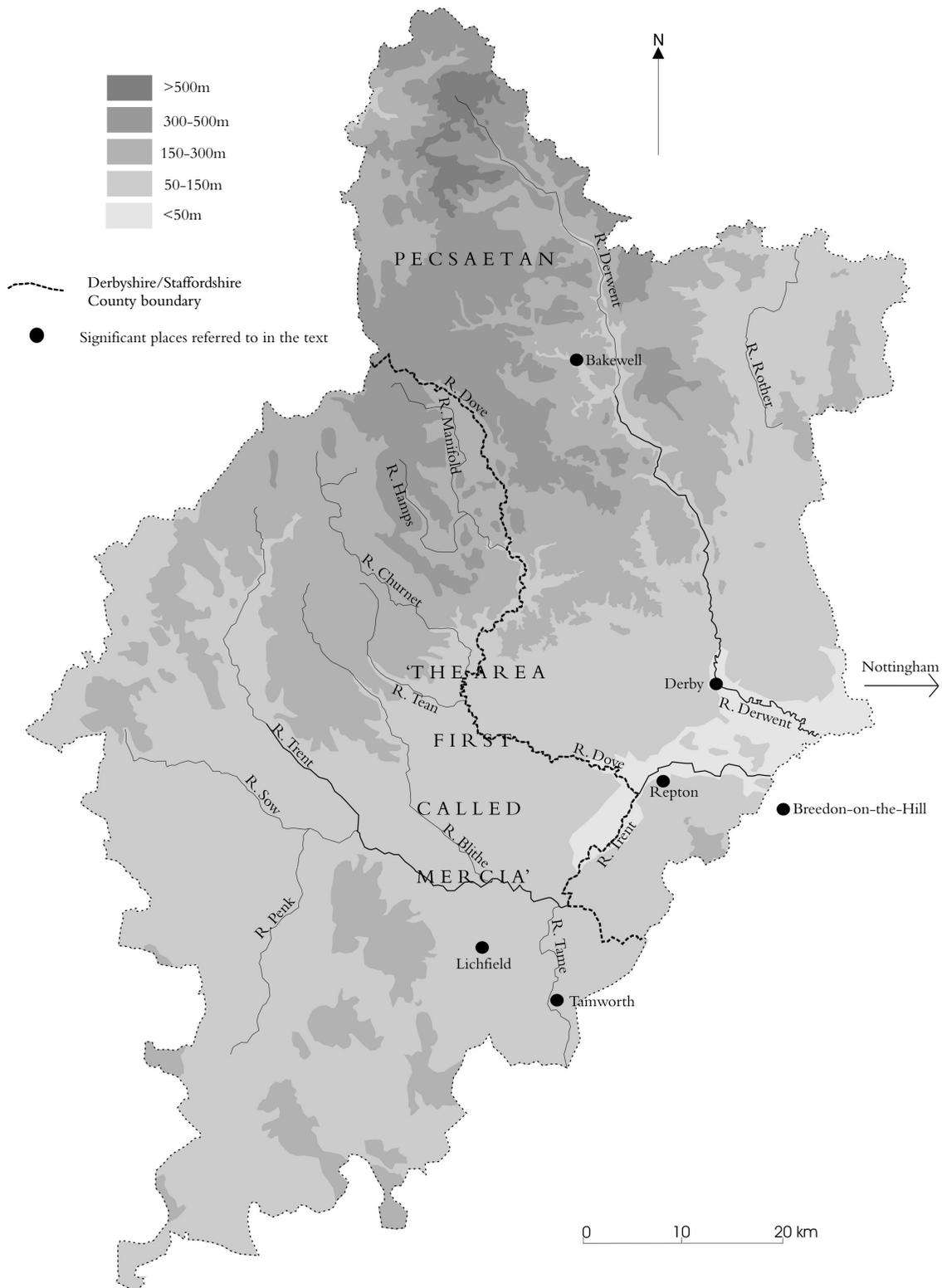


FIGURE 15  
Political divisions of the Tribal Hidage within the region

comparable district to the north and west of Lichfield was based on the Roman town of *Pennocrucio* and appears in a ninth-century charter as that of the *Pencersaetan* with a central place at Penkridge (*Pencric*) (Gelling 1992, 59). North-east Derbyshire seems to have been a comparable British-based area with little sign of an early Anglo-Saxon presence, but its links are likely to have lain northwards with what became the West Riding of Yorkshire rather than with districts further south. This area was a marcher district between Mercia and Northumbria and the exact line of the border between them may not have been established until the ninth century (Higham 2006).

The Peak District also seems to have been rather set apart from the more southerly areas. It is the only part of the two shires to have had a separate entry in the enigmatic Tribal Hidage of the eighth or ninth centuries in which the *Pecsætan* are assessed at 1200 hides—the greater part of Derbyshire and Staffordshire are subsumed in the entry for ‘original Mercia’ at 30,000 hides (Featherstone 2001). It was apparently still identified as a distinct *pago* in a charter of 963 (Brooks *et al.* 1984). In the seventh century the area was distinguished by the practice of burial under mounds which seems to have begun as a continuation of late Roman practice in the Peak. By the middle of the seventh century barrows were being constructed that included distinctively Germanic artefacts and modes of burial such as cremation (Ozanne 1964; Loveluck 1995). The inclusion of a helmet—one of only four excavated from graves—in the barrow burial of Benty Grange may indicate a claim to princely status. The barrow burials suggest potentially competing British and Anglo-Saxon elite lineages in the Peak District in the seventh century; the prize was probably the galena lead ore which had been mined and smelted in the Peak in the Roman period. No doubt Mercian and Northumbrian overlord kings would also have wished to control the area. It is not possible to construct a narrative of how the district came under Mercian control which had certainly been achieved well before the ninth century. In Domesday Book the Peak appears as one large wapentake called *Hamenstan* (after its meeting place), but in the post-Conquest period the area was divided into two wapentakes based on Bakewell and Wirksworth (Roffe 1986b, 104–5).

#### THE MERCIAN ROYAL HOUSE AND ITS CONNECTIONS WITH THE AREA

It is usually assumed that the Mercian royal house is likely to have had its origins in the Middle Trent

valley settlements, as Repton and Tamworth both seem to have been places of major significance for the dynasty, and nearby Lichfield was the seat of the Mercian bishopric (Brooks 1989, 160–2). The first recorded Mercian king is Cearl whom Bede describes as receiving Edwin of Northumbria when he was in exile before his succession in 616 and whose daughter he married (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 186–7). Rather more is known of the two sons of Pybba (or Pypba), Eowa and Penda. They appear in different sources and with rather different spheres of influence. Eowa features in the *Historia Brittonum* associated with Northumbrian kings, but Bede is more concerned with his brother Penda, a major rival of the Northumbrian rulers, who first appears as a supporter of Cadwallon of Gwynedd, but subsequently was overlord of both Welsh and other Anglo-Saxon kings (Charles-Edwards 2013, 311–12). The brothers may have ruled different parts of Mercia, for Bede wrote, with reference to events of 655, of Northern and Southern Mercians divided by the River Trent (a division which also suggests the insignificance of the future Staffordshire and Derbyshire borders at this time) (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 294). In 642 Penda and his allies defeated and killed Eowa and his ally King Oswald of Bernicia at the battle of *Maserfelth* (possibly Oswestry in the Welsh Marches) (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 24–5). Penda was ‘the first to separate the kingdom of the Mercians from the kingdom of the Northerners’ declared the *Historia Brittonum* with reference to this battle (Morris 1980, 39 and 80). In 655 the tables were turned when Oswald’s brother, King Oswiu of Northumbria, defeated and killed Penda at the battle of the River Winwaed (a tributary of the River Trent, close to Leeds). Oswiu took northern Mercia under direct control for three years and permitted Penda’s son Peada to rule the southern Mercians (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 288–95).

Penda’s son Wulfhere (658–75) re-established control of the whole of Mercia and with varying success was also overlord of other Welsh and Anglo-Saxon kingdoms as his father had been before him (for fuller details and references to early Mercia see Yorke 1990, 100–27). His brother Æthelred (675–abdication 704) followed suit and had a major victory in 679 near the River Trent over Oswiu’s son, King Ecgfrith of Northumbria, who had been a constant rival to the brothers for control of southern Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 400–1). Archbishop Theodore organised a significant truce between the rival kingdoms from which the rulers of the next generation, Cenred (704–9), the son of

Wulfhere, and Ceolred (709–16), the son of Æthelred, benefited.

The eighth century was to belong to descendants of Penda's brother Eowa: Æthelbald (716–57) who staged a coup in 716, only to be assassinated himself in 757, and his distant cousin Offa (757–96). Both were mighty overlords of the English and Welsh. Offa increased the authority of Mercian kings considerably by removing rulers of lesser kingdoms in the south and west, and receiving recognition from the great Frankish king Charlemagne (Hill and Worthington 2005). His son Ecgrifh ruled only a few months after him, and was succeeded by Coenwulf (796–821) who claimed descent from another brother of Penda. He continued Offa's success, but cracks in Mercian control of south-eastern areas appeared in the reign of his brother Ceolwulf I who was expelled by rivals in 823. Hereafter there was a series of kings with relatively short reigns some of whom seem to have been members of rival kin-groups: Beornwulf (823–5), Ludeca (825–7), Wiglaf (827–40), Beorhtwulf (840–c. 852), and Burgred (c. 852–expulsion 874). Saint's Lives provide a background of political rivalry and assassination between the descendants of Coenwulf and the 'B' and 'W' families (as they are sometimes termed from the alliterating letters of their names) (Rollason 1983). In 829 Wiglaf was temporarily driven out by King Ecgbert of Wessex (802–39), and, although he soon returned to continue his rule in Mercia, Wiglaf had had to cede control of the former south-eastern kingdoms to Wessex. In addition, the middle of the ninth century saw increasing pressure from Viking attacks.

But Mercian decline at this time can be overstated. Mercian kings still ruled a very sizeable area, and continued to invest in churches and other institutions within the kingdom. Indeed, rivalry could have led to increased displays of ostentatious patronage. New centres of royal administration that may have been established, or significantly developed, by King Offa, were probably also cultivated by the later Mercian kings. Tamworth, Derby and Stafford may have been central places for surrounding districts, comparable to the shire towns of Wessex. Tamworth was frequently visited by Kings Beorhtwulf and Burgred (Rahtz and Meeson 1992). Its large excavated watermill may suggest it was also a major processing centre, and there are similar indications for Stafford whose distinctive pottery industry seems to have begun in the mid-ninth century (Dodd 2014). There were also successes against the Viking Great Army, particularly at Nottingham in 868 when Burgred was aided by

King Æthelred of Wessex (865–71) and his young brother Alfred (grandsons of Ecgbert) (Whitelock 1961, 46). Disaster came in the winter of 873–4 when forces of the Great Army occupied Repton and King Burgred was forced from the kingdom (Whitelock 1961, 48). But was this a temporary set-back or the initiation of more long lasting change for the area of Derbyshire and Staffordshire? Ceolwulf II succeeded Burgred and reached an accommodation with the Danes. West Saxon sources derided him as 'a foolish king's thegn' (Whitelock 1961, 48), but this was a somewhat subjective view. Ceolwulf II may have been a member of the family of Coenwulf and Ceolwulf I, and he was sufficiently in charge to issue coins and charters; he disappears from view around 879. His successor Æthelred II is consistently described in West Saxon sources as an ealdorman and subject to the authority of King Alfred of Wessex (871–99) whose daughter Æthelflæd he married. Welsh and some Mercian sources, however, present Æthelred as a king and, he was a doughty fighter against Vikings and Welsh. Æthelred and his wife Æthelflæd, who ruled on her own after his death in 911, did much to restore Mercian royal authority and patronage in Derbyshire and Staffordshire (as is discussed more fully below). Æthelflæd was succeeded briefly by her daughter Ælfwyn, but then Æthelflæd's brother, the West Saxon king Edward the Elder (899–924), took control and began the integration of the Mercian regions that she had ruled into the kingdom of England.

#### DERBYSHIRE AND STAFFORDSHIRE UNDER DANISH AND ENGLISH CONTROL

Derbyshire contains some of the most impressive archaeological evidence for the activities of the Great Army in the 870s which led up to the establishment of Scandinavian overlordship in the Midlands. Excavations at Repton have revealed that the Danish *wintersetl* of 873–4 involved the construction of a substantial D-shaped enclosure on the south bank of the Trent which incorporated the stone church of Repton, previously associated with Mercian royal burials, as a gate-house. Scandinavian burials were made outside the east end of the church, and a stone mausoleum was the centre point of a mass-burial under a mound, possibly with a Scandinavian leader at its centre (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001; see also Chapter V). At Ingleby, some four kilometres south-east of Repton, were further Scandinavian-style burials of cremations under mounds which it has been suggested relate to the same period of occupation (Richards *et*

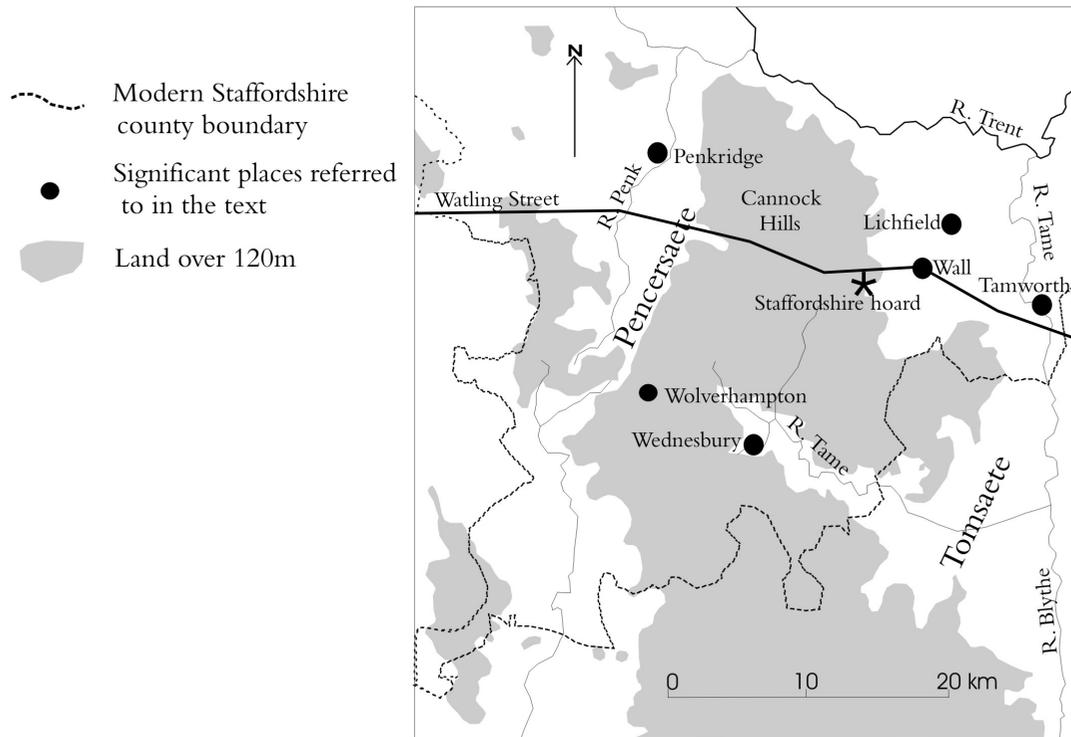


FIGURE 16

Administrative units in the ninth century (Staffordshire)

al. 1995; Richards 2001). As Julian Richards (2001, 102) suggests, Repton and Ingleby can be seen as 'active political statements'. There was also Danish occupation of the Mercian administrative centre of Northworthy whose name was changed permanently to Old Norse Derby, and it has been suggested that the Danes may have utilised the walled area of the Roman settlement of Little Chesters on the opposite bank of the river to the Anglo-Saxon settlement (Sparey Green 2002, 139–44). Æthelflæd's forces are recorded taking the fortification and its dependent territory in 917, and 'four of her thegns, who were dear to her, were killed within the gates' (Whitelock 1961, 64–5). However, there are few additional visible signs of a Scandinavian presence in southern Derbyshire, either from place-names or artefacts, and it contrasts in these respects with the east Midland areas of the Danelaw (Hadley 2000). Nevertheless, it was grouped with Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham and Stamford as one of the Five Boroughs which King Edmund had to force to submit to him in 942 (Whitelock 1961, 71). Watling Street is seen as a major political divide in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* narrative of the late-tenth

and eleventh centuries, and sometimes the Danish characteristics of the eastern area are stressed, but the confederation should be seen predominantly as an administrative rather than an ethnic division (Innes 2000, 72–5; Roffe 1986b, 114–16).

The lead deposits of the Peak District, and accessways to the York area with its concentration of Viking settlement, would have made control of northern Derbyshire a priority. Sometime before 911, when Æthelred died, he and Edward the Elder encouraged the Anglo-Saxon thegn Uhtred, perhaps a member of the noble dynasty of Bamburgh, to buy out Scandinavian settlers at Hope and Ashford (Sawyer 1979, 5–7). One of Edward's first actions on taking control of the area ruled by Æthelflæd was to order the building of a fortification in the vicinity of Bakewell, and it was there that he received the submission of the kings of northern England and Scotland in 920 (Whitelock 1961, 67–8). North-eastern Derbyshire does seem from the place-name evidence to have had some degree of Scandinavian settlement, perhaps from southern Yorkshire (Roffe 1986b, 114–15). By 942 Dore and the Whitwell gap were identified as

defining the frontier between the Midland districts that recognised the English king and Yorkshire which was still under Scandinavian control (Whitelock 1961, 71; Higham 2006, 408–11).

In Staffordshire there are a small numbers of place-names in the north-east of the county that may contain Old Norse elements, or have been influenced by Old Norse speech; both Ilam and Leek are possible examples (Gelling 1992, 135–7). But Staffordshire is not usually treated as part of the Danelaw and never seems to have been under major Danish occupation. Most of the area of Staffordshire counted as part of the western Mercian districts in the tenth century, while much of Derbyshire, as we have seen, was linked with areas to its east. Æthelflæd is recorded as constructing *burhs* at Tamworth and Stafford in 913, but this seems to have been to protect the territory from raiding rather than to take them from Danish control (Whitelock 1961, 62–3). There was a major battle at Tettenhall in 910 when a combined West Saxon and Mercian army overtook a raiding force from Northumbria and decisively defeated it (Whitelock 1961, 61–2; Horovitz 2010); and as late as 943 Tamworth was raided by King Olaf of York (Whitelock 1961, 71). Staffordshire (and Derbyshire) no doubt suffered from other raids, for instance when Danish raiders went from Northampton and Leicester to Hook Norton in Oxfordshire in 913 (Whitelock 1961, 62–3). A certain amount of damage to standing buildings such as churches might be expected, and the apparent destruction of the shrine of St Chad which led to the burial of the Lichfield angel sculpture (Lichfield 1) has tentatively been suggested as an example (Rodwell *et al.* 2008, 58–60). But there would not seem to have been any major disruption to ecclesiastical provision; even Repton church was restored, and it is recorded as a small minster in Domesday Book (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001, 53). What may have caused as much change in the two counties were alterations in the pattern of patronage and administration when they were incorporated into the English kingdom.

Two families seem to have been particularly significant in the two shires in the reigns of Edward the Elder's successors, and a means through which they hoped to control the area. We know about them through the charters of Burton Abbey, the only major charter archive to survive from the district (Sawyer 1975; 1979). Uhtred who purchased land at Hope and Ashbourne from the Danes, is probably the same man as Uhtred *dux* who received a substantial grant of land from King Eadred in 949, and a relative of Uhtred *cild* who was granted land by the same king at Chesterfield

in 955 (Sawyer 1975, 31–4; Sawyer 1979, nos. 3, 9 and 13). In the middle Trent the dominant family was that related to a prominent noblewoman called Wulfrun. Several sources point to her significance, but frustratingly do not explain it. Possibly she was a descendant of one of the Mercian royal houses who held power in the ninth century, and she was evidently a major landowner. She is one of the few non-royal women to appear in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* whose D version records that she was captured in Olaf's raid on Tamworth in 943 (Whitelock 1961, 71). She is credited with founding a religious community at Wolverhampton (see further below), and her son Wulfric Spott, the founder of Burton Abbey was, most unusually, referred to as *Wulfrunesunu*, that is by descent from his mother rather than his father (Sawyer 1979, xxxviii). A granddaughter was one of the wives of King Cnut. The family were major landowners and office-holders in Staffordshire and Derbyshire and adjoining areas, and have been seen as part of a royal policy for controlling the region (Sawyer 1975; Insley 2012). In c. 993 Ælfhelm, the brother of Wulfric Spott, was made ealdorman of York, but lost the trust of King Æthelred Unræd in 1006 and was killed and his two sons blinded (Whitelock 1961, 87). The family were connected through marriage with that of Earls Leofwine and Ælfgar of Mercia which was dominant in the Midlands in the eleventh century, though the main interests of this group lay outside the two counties (Baxter 2007). The administrative reforms which resulted in the creation of Staffordshire, at the end of Æthelred's reign, and of Derbyshire, possibly not until the reign of Edward the Confessor, seem to have resulted in more land being taken directly under royal control than had been the case in the mid-tenth century, judging by a comparison of the Burton charters with Domesday Book entries (Sawyer 1979).

#### CONVERSION AND THE SEE OF LICHFIELD

When the Mercian kingdom was coming into existence in the seventh century there were already Christians in the study area, especially in Staffordshire, because Christianity had become firmly entrenched in British communities of the west in the post-Roman period. Although the earliest Mercian kings were not Christian, and certain rituals of the pagan religion may have been important for reinforcing bonds with their Germanic warriors, it was not a bar to them forming alliance with Welsh kings. There is no evidence that the religion of British subjects was an issue with them and even Bede, who was strongly critical of Penda,

admitted that he did not oppose the conversion of Anglo-Saxons in his province (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 278–81). The first arrival of a foreign mission was the result of the marriage of Penda's son Peada to a daughter of King Oswiu of Northumbria in 653, and was continued when Oswiu took more direct control of Mercia after his defeat of Penda in 655. As the Mercian kings became more closely involved with Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of the south and east they not only came under pressure to convert to Christianity, but also to take charge of any British churches that were in their territories as these had been deemed separatist and potentially heretical by successive popes and archbishops of Canterbury.

The process began in earnest in the two counties when Chad was appointed bishop of Lichfield in 669 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 336–7); his brother Cedd had been one of those who had been sent to Mercia from Northumbria in 653. The choice of Lichfield was itself symptomatic of how the Anglo-Saxon Church in much of Staffordshire was to be based on British foundations. The excavation of an enigmatic two-celled stone structure in Lichfield dated to the fifth and sixth centuries suggests the likelihood that Lichfield had been previously a British ecclesiastical centre (Sargent 2013). Other churches that later emerge as prominent in western Staffordshire may also have had British origins, although that is not at the moment supported by archaeological evidence. This seems particularly likely in the case of Eccleshall, whose first element contains *ecles* that is usually taken to be indicative of a British religious community encountered by Old English speakers and has been combined with *halh* which may have administrative connotations, and Penkridge, whose name derives from that of the Romano-British centre of *Pennocrucium*. Both these places are known sites of mother churches of large parishes from Domesday Book and other later medieval sources (Gelling 1992, 58–62). North-east Derbyshire is another potential area for a takeover of British resources, and particularly likely to have come under the reforming arm of Wilfrid, abbot of Ripon, when he carried out some episcopal duties in Mercia before the appointment of Chad (Colgrave 1927, 30–3).

Chad's own family monastery was at Lastingham in north Yorkshire, and active connections evidently continued between the two foundations even after his death (Morris, R. 2015, 126–35), maintaining the strong Northumbrian links of the conversion period Church in Mercia. Chad died in Lichfield in 672; he was buried first close to the church of St Mary

and then he was translated as a saint into a newly-built church of St Peter. Both these churches were probably on the site of the present cathedral, but Chad also seems to have had a place of retreat at the site of St Chad's church at Stowe (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 336–47; Sargent 2013). His cult took off soon after his death, and was enhanced for later centuries by the detailed description of his death provided by Bede and his glowing testimonial for the religious life that Chad had led. The entry for Lichfield in the pre-tenth century section of the Anglo-Saxon list of saints' resting-places also states that Chad's brother Cedd was buried and culted at Lichfield (Rollason 1978, 61–2), though Bede had described his burial at Lastingham (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 286–9). A third saint recorded for Lichfield in the list, Ceatta, could possibly be another member of the same family, if his name is not just a duplicate of that of Chad (Ceadda) (Blair 2002b, 520). See Fig. 17.

An occasion for the transfer of Cedd to Lastingham and enhancement of Chad's shrine could have been the temporary promotion of the see of Lichfield to an archbishopric in 787. The new archbishopric was a response to Offa's quarrel with Archbishop Jænbert of Canterbury that was primarily concerned with ownership of estates, but seems to have led to Jænbert refusing to further Offa's dynastic ambitions by anointing his son Ecgrith as his successor (Brooks 1984, 114–27). A pliant Pope Hadrian, who had been receiving generous payments from the Mercian king for some years, enabled Bishop Hygeberht to be elevated to archbishop of Lichfield at a synod in Chelsea in 787. The new arrangements were short-lived, and in 803, again with papal support, the *status quo ante* was restored and Hygeberht's successor Aldwulf became a mere bishop. Nevertheless it might be expected that some new work had been undertaken at Lichfield to bolster its new status, and the Lichfield angel (Lichfield 1) is possible evidence for the enhancement of the shrine of St Chad (Rodwell *et al.* 2008).

The non-survival of charters or any substantial documentation for the see of Lichfield means that a limited amount can be said about its history. Although it has an unbroken succession of bishops very little is known about most of them. Leofwine who was appointed bishop in 1053 was formerly the first abbot of Coventry founded by Earl Leofric of Mercia, and possibly related to him (Barlow 1979, 218–19; Baxter 2007, 153–63). He refused to attend a legatine council at Winchester to answer the charge that he had a wife and child. Such marriages were regarded as acceptable in the Anglo-Saxon Church but not by the Normans,

so Leofwine was obliged to resign. Peter who was appointed in his place in 1070 moved the see to the collegiate church of St John in Chester in 1075, and in 1102 his successor moved it to Coventry (Lander 1980, 5–6). None of these developments can have been helpful for the survival of documentary evidence at Lichfield. From Domesday Book it can be deduced that the bishop of Lichfield in the reign of Edward the Confessor held land throughout the diocese in Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Shropshire and Cheshire, though lands in the last had been devastated by Welsh attacks. Its endowments appear modest compared to many other bishoprics and it may have been the poorest in the country (Barlow 1979, 218–19). One would have expected considerably more investment in the premier Mercian see in the eighth and ninth centuries, and it may be that by 1086 the see had lost many of its early endowments.

#### ROYAL AND OTHER NOTABLE LAY PATRONS

King Ceolred was buried in Lichfield in 716 (Whitelock 1961 26), but burial at episcopal sites did not become the norm in Mercia. Kings preferred burial in a monastery founded on their lands and of which they were patron, and many of them were so-called ‘double houses’, joint communities of nuns and monks or clerics which were controlled by an abbess who often herself was a member of the royal house. One of the best recorded examples is Repton which was certainly in existence by the end of the seventh century, though it looks increasingly unlikely that it should be identified with the community of the *Hrepingas* supposedly founded by the Middle Anglian prince, Frithuric, and linked at an early date with Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, and *Medehamstede* (Kelly 2009, 178–85). The earliest royal burial may have been that of Merewalh, a son of Penda who ruled lands to the south-west of Staffordshire in modern Herefordshire. Although the record of his burial is found only in the eleventh-century *Vita* of his daughter St Mildburga (Rollason 1982, 25–6, 80–1), it may well be a reliable tradition. It was Repton under Abbess Ælfhryth that the royal prince Guthlac joined as a cleric at the end of the seventh century (Colgrave 1956, 84–7). The eighth-century *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* indicates that Guthlac was a supporter of the exiled Mercian prince Æthelbald, and possibly Ælfhryth was too. It was at Repton that Æthelbald was buried after his murder at Seckington, near Tamworth (Whitelock 1961, 31). The late Anglo-Saxon shiring of the Midlands placed Seckington in Warwickshire, but in the eighth

century it was probably, like Repton, in the territory of the *Tomsaetan*. King Wiglaf was buried at Repton in 840, and his mausoleum was subsequently used for the burial of his murdered grandson Wigstan in 849 (Rollason 1983, 5–9; Thacker 1985, 12–14). Wiglaf’s mausoleum has been identified with the square stone structure that was originally free-standing to the east of the church, but was subsequently incorporated into an eastern arm as a crypt, probably as part of the burgeoning cult of St Wigstan that is recorded in the earliest section of the ‘List of Saints’ Resting Places’ (Biddle 1986, 16–22; Rollason 1978, 63–4 and 89). That it was a place of burial for kings and princes from different branches of the Mercian royal house over two centuries helps to explain the choice of Repton by the Great Army as its camp in the winter of 873–4 (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 2001; Richards 2001). The army’s occupation of the Mercian royal burial site, and use for its own burials, underlined the transfer of power after the defeat of King Burgred (see also Chapter V).

A ninth-century abbess of Repton called Cynewaru may be recorded in a charter of 835 in which she grants her estate at Wirksworth to Ealdorman Hunbert with the reservation of an annual payment of lead to the monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury (where the record of the transaction was preserved) (Brooks and Kelly 2013, 636–8). Although it is possible that Cynewaru was abbess of a nunnery at Wirksworth, there are various grounds for thinking that she is more likely to have been an abbess of Repton. Hunbert (or Humbert) was ealdorman of the *Tomsaetan* in which Repton was based, whereas Wirksworth was in the territory of the *Pecsaetan* which probably had its own ealdorman. The charter which identifies him as such was granted at a royal council held at Repton in 848 (Kelly 2009, 206–15). It is entirely plausible that a major royal foundation such as Repton would have been granted an estate in an area of important mineral resources, in this case lead that might be used for the roofing of churches as well as other furnishings. There are parallels from Kent for royally endowed nunneries being granted shares in resources and revenues otherwise reserved for the king (Kelly 1992). It is also more plausible that an abbess would grant away an outlying estate than one on which her own foundation was based. It would be possible that Repton could have had a daughter house at Wirksworth (as, for instance, Whitby did at Hackness), and that the abbesses would be patrons of its church (see also p. 48).

Another significant royal nunnery may have lain at Hanbury (Staffordshire) which is associated with

Werbung, the daughter of King Wulfhere of Mercia (658–75). Werbung seems to have been an important saint for the dynasty, but her life and cult are poorly recorded in rather late sources (Rollason 1982, 26–7; Thacker 1985, 4, 18–19; Blair 2002b, 557; Love 2004, 25–51). She is reputed to have died at another religious foundation at Threckingham (Lincolnshire), but was buried at her request in her house at Hanbury. Nine years later her remains are said to have been translated, and she was recognised as a saint, on the orders of her cousin King Ceolred (709–16). Dedications to her were widespread in western Mercia, and several royal councils are said to have met at *Werbungingwic* which would seem to be a place especially associated with her, possibly Hanbury itself (Thacker 1985, 4; Rollason 1989, 118). More might have been known of her links with Hanbury had her body not been moved, probably by Æthelflæd, to Chester which subsequently became the main focus of her cult (Camp 2015, 102–32).

Rather more tenuous are the claims made by Stone priory in the post-Conquest period to have been an early Mercian royal foundation and to have possessed the relics of two sons of King Wulfhere called Wulfhad and Ruffinus (Blair 2002b, 561; Camp 2015, 1–2). Wulfhad sounds possible for a son of Wulfhere, but Ruffinus does not. Their *Vita* in a fourteenth-century manuscript is an ingenious concoction based on Bede's description of the martyrdom of two princes from the Isle of Wight at Stoneham in Hampshire, but is historically worthless (Rumble 1997). The absence of any reference to Wulfhad in the late Anglo-Saxon material which refers to other early Mercian saints and children of Wulfhere and his Kentish wife Eormenhild is a further reason to doubt Stone's claims (Rollason 1982). If it had been an early minster there is little sign of this in Domesday Book which does not include an entry for Stone though a priest is recorded for Walton that was in Stone parish. Claims that there was a late Saxon nunnery at Stone seem even more delusory and the result of antiquarian speculation (Foot 2000, 187–90).

Æthelred and Æthelflæd are associated with the transfers of several royal saints, and this has been interpreted as a movement of relics from places which had lost status, or were subject to Viking control, to new centres which were particularly associated with their patronage (Thacker 1985; Bintley 2015). It was not something limited to their reigns alone as there were many transfers of relics in the later Anglo-Saxon period, including the removal by Cnut of the remains of St Wigstan from Repton to Evesham (Rollason

1989, 144–63). There may also have been earlier precedents in Mercian territory for such political and strategic use of saints' cults by rulers. In Derbyshire and Staffordshire there seem to be examples of royal promotion of new centres in the late eighth and ninth centuries which can be compared to the shire towns of Wessex (though late Saxon rearrangements meant that not all of the Mercian examples were the centres of Domesday Book shires). Discussion has tended to focus on their defensive circuits and whether they should be classed as *burhs* (Bassett 2007), but they can also be interpreted as foci for royal administration and the processing of renders. Among their shared characteristics are at least two major churches, one of which might be used for significant royal events and contain the cult of an early Anglo-Saxon saint, often with royal connections.

In Northworthy/Derby the favoured church was St Alkmund's, a dedication of unknown date to a Northumbrian prince Ealhmund, the son of King Alhred (765–74), who had been killed on the order of King Eardwulf of Northumbria in *c.* 800 (Rollason 1983, 4–5, 20). King Coenwulf of Mercia had been attacked by Eardwulf in 801 on the grounds that he had been harbouring his enemies. One of these could have been Ealhmund and it is a reasonable hypothesis that Coenwulf was responsible for his burial in the church at Northworthy/Derby and for the promotion of his cult as a murdered royal saint in a comparable way to the culting of the murdered Wigstan at Repton. The burial of Ealhmund at Northworthy is recorded in the first section of 'Anglo-Saxon Saints' Resting Places' (Rollason 1978, 89). The elaborate stone coffin excavated from St Alkmund's (Derby 7) could be that of Ealhmund, though another significant burial in the town was that of the Mercian ealdorman Æthelwulf whose body was conveyed back there after his death in battle against Vikings at Reading in 871 (Campbell 1962, 36–7). Both St Alkmund's and Derby's other major church of All Saints were relatively large minster churches under royal control at the time of Domesday Book, All Saints having seven clergy and St Alkmund's six. The two churches were regarded as jointly constituting a royal free chapel in the thirteenth century (Denton 1970, 108–12). In addition there was a church dedicated to St Werbung in the district known as Wardwick (Sparey-Green 2002, 141–4), and five or six small churches are recorded for Derby in the Domesday survey.

Stafford possessed the obscure cult of St Bertelin who is not recorded in any Anglo-Saxon source. In some later accounts he is described as a hermit,

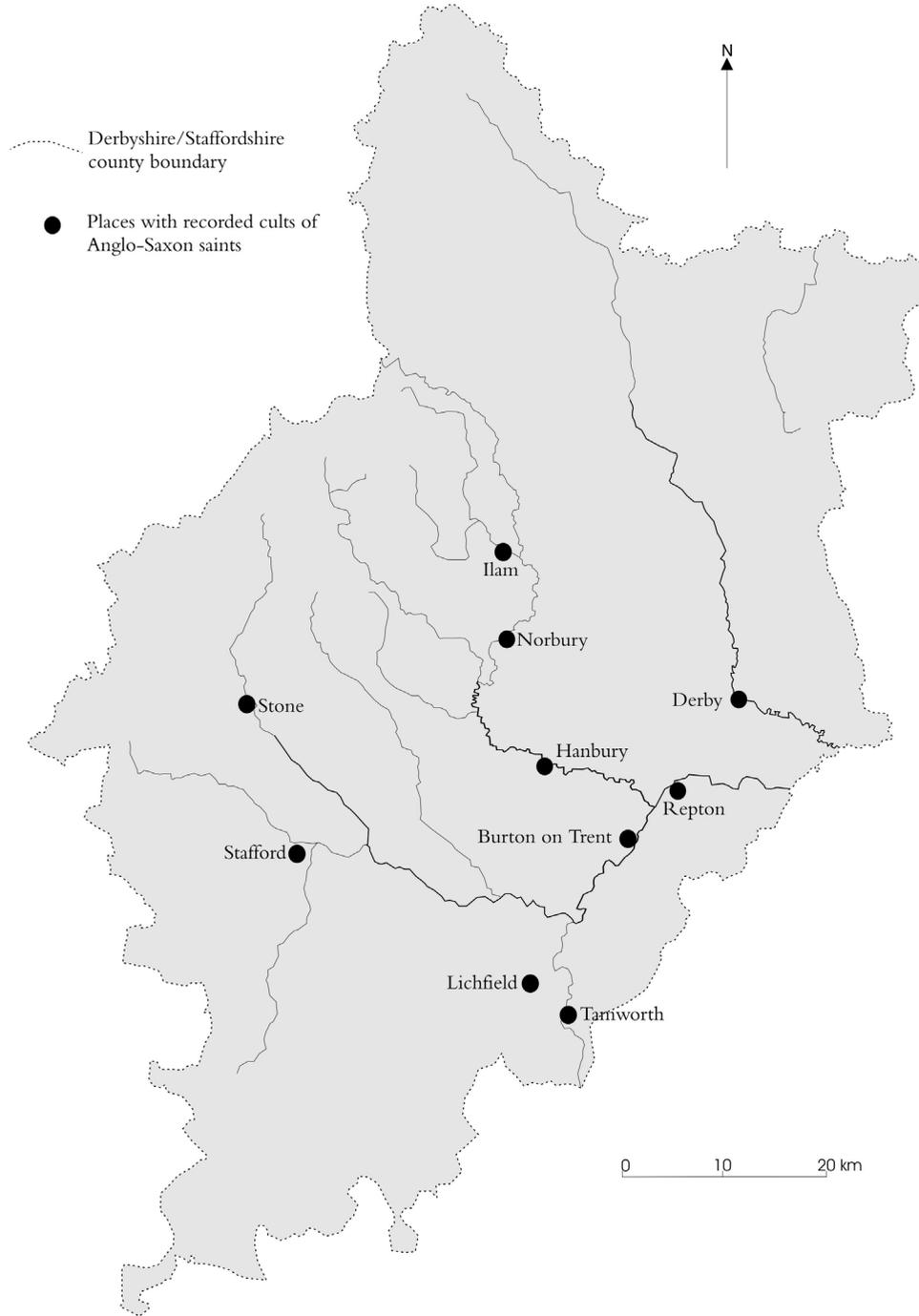


FIGURE 17

Places associated with Anglo-Saxon saints' cults

- Andresey Island (St Modwenna) – within modern Burton
- Burton-on-Trent (St Modwenna)
- Derby (St Ealhmund/Alkmund)
- Hanbury (St Werburg)
- Ilam (St Bertelin)
- Lichfield (St Chad, Cedd, Ceatta)
- Norbury (St Barloc)
- Repton (St Wigstan)
- Stafford (St Bertelin)
- Stone (SS Wulfhad and Ruffinus)
- Tamworth (St Edith)

which is something of a default description for saints of early origin about whom nothing was known in the later Middle Ages, and probably also the result of ahistorical attempts to equate him with the hermit Beccel of the *Life of St Guthlac* (Blair 2002b, 515–6; Carver 2010, 73–6). His Old English name may have been Beorhthelm and other traditions concerning him claim that he was of royal birth (though this too can be something of a topos in hagiographical accounts) (Farr and Horne 1954, 6–9). It is just possible that he was a relative—perhaps violently killed—of King Beorhtwulf (840–52) who held regular assemblies at Tamworth. His possible royal associations receive some support from the promotion of his cult by Æthelflæd, for the church of the *burh* she founded at Runcorn in 915 was dedicated to him (Thacker 1985, 18–19). There was also a cult site of St Bertelin at Ilam in Staffordshire with possible remains of a shrine, as well as other cult sites (Farr and Horne 1954, 7–9; Blair 2002b, 516). It is possible that it was the church at Ilam with which Bertelin/Beorhthelm was originally associated, and that the cults at Stafford and Runcorn were secondary as a means of boosting the status of these settlements. Successive timber and stone chapels associated with St Bertelin have been excavated at the west end of St Mary's church in Stafford, and overlay earlier burials (Oswald 1954; Carver 2010, 21–9; Dodd 2014, 5–6). It was a major foundation with thirteen canons in Domesday Book, the same number as the two Derby churches combined, and like them it was subsequently a royal free chapel (Farr and Horne 1954, 9; Denton 1970, 93–102). It has been suggested on the basis of recent excavations that St Mary's/St Bertelin's stood in a royal enclosure in the centre of the Saxon *burh* (Cuttler *et al.* 2009, 75–9).

The suggested royal enclosure at Stafford is based on a projection of comparable arrangements at Tamworth. Although Tamworth was split between Warwickshire and Staffordshire in the late Saxon ordering of the shires, it seems in the late-eighth and ninth centuries to have been the centre of the district of the *Tomsaetan* and a regular venue for royal assemblies (Rahtz and Meeson 1992, 1–7). Tamworth's religious community is mentioned in the will of Wulfric Spott (Sawyer 1979, 53–6). After the Norman Conquest the church is recorded as being dedicated to St Edith and was located in the area that it has been suggested housed a royal enclave in the centre of the *burh*. It may have been here that Æthelflæd died in 918 (Whitelock 1961, 66–7) and that in 926 a sister of King Athelstan married the Danish King Sihtric (Whitelock 1961,

D, 68). In the 'List of the Resting-Places of Anglo-Saxon Saints' a saint Edith is recorded for Polesworth in Warwickshire, but close to the Warwickshire/Staffordshire border and so originally probably in the territory of the *Tomsaetan* (Rollason 1978, 90). It seems very likely that Edith of Polesworth is the saint culded at Tamworth, but to go any further in an unravelling her identity does not seem possible. There has been considerable confusion and speculation on the matter from both medieval and later writers (Foot 2000, 139–42, 191–6; Blair 2002b, 527–8). Matters are not helped by the fact that other Anglo-Saxon St Ediths existed and attempts have been made by medieval and later writers to conflate one or other of these with Edith of Polesworth. The thirteenth-century St Albans author, Roger of Wendover, seems to have been the first to suggest that the sister of Athelstan who married Sihtric was called Edith and that she was Edith of Polesworth having retired there in her widowhood (Foot 2011, 48). The fact of the marriage in Tamworth may have suggested the identification. Edith of Polesworth may well have been an early Mercian royal saint; a saint of that name, for instance, is associated with Aylesbury (Blair 2002b, 527). Possibly her cult was moved to Tamworth when it was being developed as a royal centre, or when it was fortified by Æthelflæd in 913, but we do not certainly know that the church was dedicated to St Edith until after the Norman Conquest. Recent excavations in the church have produced possible evidence for a shrine to St Edith in the crypt (Meeson 2015).

Bakewell may have been a centre for the *Pecsætan* comparable in status to Derby, Stafford and Tamworth in the late eighth and ninth centuries, but does not appear in written records before the tenth century when Edward had a *burh* built close to Bakewell itself in 920 and it was the site of his major meeting with the northern kings (Whitelock 1961, 67–8). The sculptures may provide evidence for an ecclesiastical community at Bakewell before the reference to a *coenubium* which Ealdorman Uhtred apparently intended to found there, according to the charter of 949 by which he received land at Bakewell from King Eadred (Sawyer 1979, 14–15). This could have been an additional foundation, or an augmentation of an existing church. Bakewell like Repton is recorded as possessing a church and two priests in Domesday Book and like it may have been a minster church which had once been more significant.

King Eadred's grant of land at Bakewell to Uhtred is an indication that by the later Anglo-Saxon period

it was local office-holders and landowners who were the patrons of new churches rather than kings. Most influential of all was the family of Wulfrun who gave her name to Wolverhampton (p. 41). In 985 she had been granted the estate at Hampton by King Æthelred. A charter of 994, although of dubious authenticity, may nevertheless be a record of the foundation, or possibly re-foundation, of a minster church at Wulfrun's Hampton that was apparently generously endowed with lands in southern Staffordshire in what had once been the territory of the *Pencersaetan* (Hooke 1993). The clerks of Wolverhampton are among the major landowners with a separate entry in Staffordshire Domesday Book; their subsequent emergence as a royal free chapel confirms that they had come under royal control (Denton 1970, 41–7). See Wolverhampton 1 (p. 310).

Wulfrun's son Wulfric Spott was even more generous and ambitious in his plans for the monastery of Burton-on-Trent that occupy a large part of his will (Sawyer 1992). This is the only Benedictine reform monastery known for Staffordshire or Derbyshire, and, indeed, the only attested male monastic community founded since the time of St Chad. Wulfric granted extensive estates in Cheshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire to Burton-on-Trent. The abbey did not hold all of these in 1086 (the family's fall from favour in 1006 may have had an effect), but it was still generously endowed. It fell into the sphere of influence of the Leofwinesons in the eleventh century and several of its estates were held in 1066 by members of the family (Baxter 2007, 180–2). Post-conquest Burton claimed an early Anglo-Saxon saint called Modwenna, who is said to have lived as a hermit on Andresey Island in the Trent, but her *Vita* is a complete fabrication based on that of an Irish saint called Monenna with the addition of some local details (Bartlett 2002). It is not in itself sufficient grounds for suggesting an earlier foundation at Burton. Wulfric's will also shows that he had lordship of the community at Tamworth which he left to one of his daughters, and it is possible that lands that had once belonged to Tamworth were used to endow Burton.

These major landowners and their endowments may be merely more substantial examples of what was happening on a lesser scale throughout Derbyshire and Staffordshire in the later Saxon period as new landowners of different origins established themselves in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Surviving sculptures, traces of late Anglo-Saxon architecture in standing churches and brief, enigmatic references in

Domesday Book may be the only evidence of their activities.

#### MOTHER CHURCHES AND PASTORAL CARE

It was the responsibility of bishops to ordain the priests of their dioceses and to oversee the provision of pastoral care. Bede represents Bishop Chad as a model bishop carrying out evangelical work on foot until ordered by Archbishop Theodore to use a horse for longer journeys (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 336–7). But Bede provides few specific details and Chad was bishop in Mercia for only two and a half years. It is usually assumed that the needs of the bulk of the population were met by groups of clergy based in central minsters. In western Staffordshire in particular some such sites could have been taken over from British clergy. Others were likely to have been founded by the bishops themselves on estates given for that purpose; Bede describes how Bishop Seaxwulf of Lichfield (c. 676–90) provided Bishop Putta of Rochester with a church and small estate when he had to leave his see because of devastation caused by King Æthelred of Mercia (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 368–9). But not all places where clergy met the populace in the Middle Saxon period needed to have had churches and much worship may have been carried out in the open air (Gittos 2013, 19–54). Whether such sites were marked in a significant way, and whether this was one of the uses of some early stone crosses is an interesting possibility (Talbot 1954, 154–5).

Major ecclesiastical foundations built by other patrons might also be providers of pastoral care, especially for those who lived on their estates. One of the duties of the clergy attached to the royal double house of Repton which Guthlac joined can be presumed to have been ministration to the surrounding population (Colgrave 1956, 84–7). When Repton had ceased to be a double community in the later Anglo-Saxon period it appears to have continued as a community of clerics, though in Domesday Book only two are recorded. Although owned by the king, it was not one of the specially favoured minsters that became a royal free chapel and had presumably lost most of its earlier endowment. In the post-Conquest period it was responsible for church provision in Derbyshire south of the Trent that formed the deanery of Repton (Roffe 1986b, 106), a probable development of its role as the most significant Anglo-Saxon minster in the area and its possession of a fine stone church.

In some sees, for example Worcester, the bishops

were very successful in the ninth and tenth centuries in acquiring control of early royal minsters (Barrow 2015, 311–19), but it cannot be demonstrated that this occurred in Lichfield, and unfortunately there is no early documentation for any of its Domesday Book estates. The land held by the bishop of Chester in 1086 (that presumably had been held previously by the bishop of Lichfield) in Staffordshire and Derbyshire is not extensive, especially in the latter shire. Lichfield itself is described as only supporting five priests, less than the larger churches under royal control. Of the episcopal estates, only Eccleshall (besides Lichfield) has sculptural finds. This large estate with dependencies, and the *ecles* first element that suggests it may once have been a significant British church site (Gelling 1992, 58–9), could be the best candidate for a former minster church that had been absorbed by the bishopric (though only a single priest is recorded there in Domesday Book). The former see of Lichfield seems meanly endowed by the eleventh century and, as noted, has been considered the poorest in the country (Barlow 1979, 218–19).

At the end of the Anglo-Saxon period the king is presented as possessing control of the largest collegiate churches in Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and these subsequently emerge as royal free chapels (Fig. 18). Staffordshire was exceptionally well-endowed with them; those in the two shires were Wolverhampton, Tettenhall, Penkridge and St Bertelin's/St Mary's, Stafford in Staffordshire, and St Alkmund's together with All Saints, Derby (Styles 1936; Denton 1970). Of these only Tettenhall has not been discussed previously. It is known only for being the site of an important defeat of a Viking army in 910, and it is possible that the church, of which little is known (now part of Wolverhampton suburbs), could have been founded to commemorate the victory (Horovitz 2010). The reorganisation into eleventh-century shires may have provided an opportunity to strengthen royal interests. Protection of the status of minster churches was one of the priorities of late tenth- and early eleventh-century legislation, and the royal possession or acquisition of major minsters, such as those of Staffordshire and Derbyshire, may have been one reason for the concern. Whereas Lichfield is only recorded with five priests in Domesday Book, Penkridge had nine, Stafford thirteen, and the two Derby churches combined also had thirteen; numbers for Wolverhampton and Tettenhall are not specified. The equal number of priests in Stafford and Derby may suggest a relatively recent reinvigoration of those foundations in the two shire-towns.

A network of mother churches can be suggested for much of Derbyshire and Staffordshire for the eleventh century using indications in more extensive post-Conquest records (Roffe 1986b). In Domesday Book the only places having more than one priest, in addition to those referred to above, are Norbury (Staffordshire) and Bakewell with two priests each. Both are potentially early foundations, but with no early documentation. Bakewell has been discussed above (p. 46). The cult of an extremely obscure St Barloc, described as a hermit, is recorded at Norbury in the post-Conquest period, but nothing further can be said about him (Blair 2002b, 513–4). So, there is a problem in knowing how far back later arrangements can be projected, let alone whether these had their origins in the conversion period (Cambridge and Rollason 1995; Blair 2005, 79–134). The lack of written records for the Anglo-Saxon Church in Derbyshire and Staffordshire means that we are not in a position to know when most churches were founded. Sculpture has a potential here to suggest origins earlier than the first written records. Some churches, such as Wirksworth, which appears with just a church and a priest in Domesday Book, may once have been more significant foundations whose complex histories have been lost (see p. 43 above). But it cannot be assumed that all were. A trend under way before the Norman Conquest was the foundation of more local churches (Blair 2005, 368–425). Many of these seem to have been built on the initiative of the estate holders and Domesday Book suggests that the process was well-advanced in Derbyshire and Staffordshire, especially in the more valuable and nucleated settlements. Derbyshire and Staffordshire were in different Domesday Book circuits, and the way of recording manorial churches differed. In Derbyshire the formula was 'a church and a priest', and there are thirty-seven such entries (with a record of 'two churches and a priest' for some exceptionally large parishes). Five entries for Derbyshire refer to a priest only, and this was the normal formulation for Staffordshire where there are twenty-five such entries. The number of churches by 1086 in Staffordshire is likely to be under-represented; for instance, the entry for Leek, a royal estate, does not refer to a priest though the sculptural finds might lead one to expect a church (p. 295). The entries for the royal estates seem particularly variable. Much interesting history must have gone unrecorded and this is particularly likely to be the case in northern Staffordshire and Derbyshire (outside the Peak) where the written record is notably poor. The sculptural finds from north-east Staffordshire, such as those from

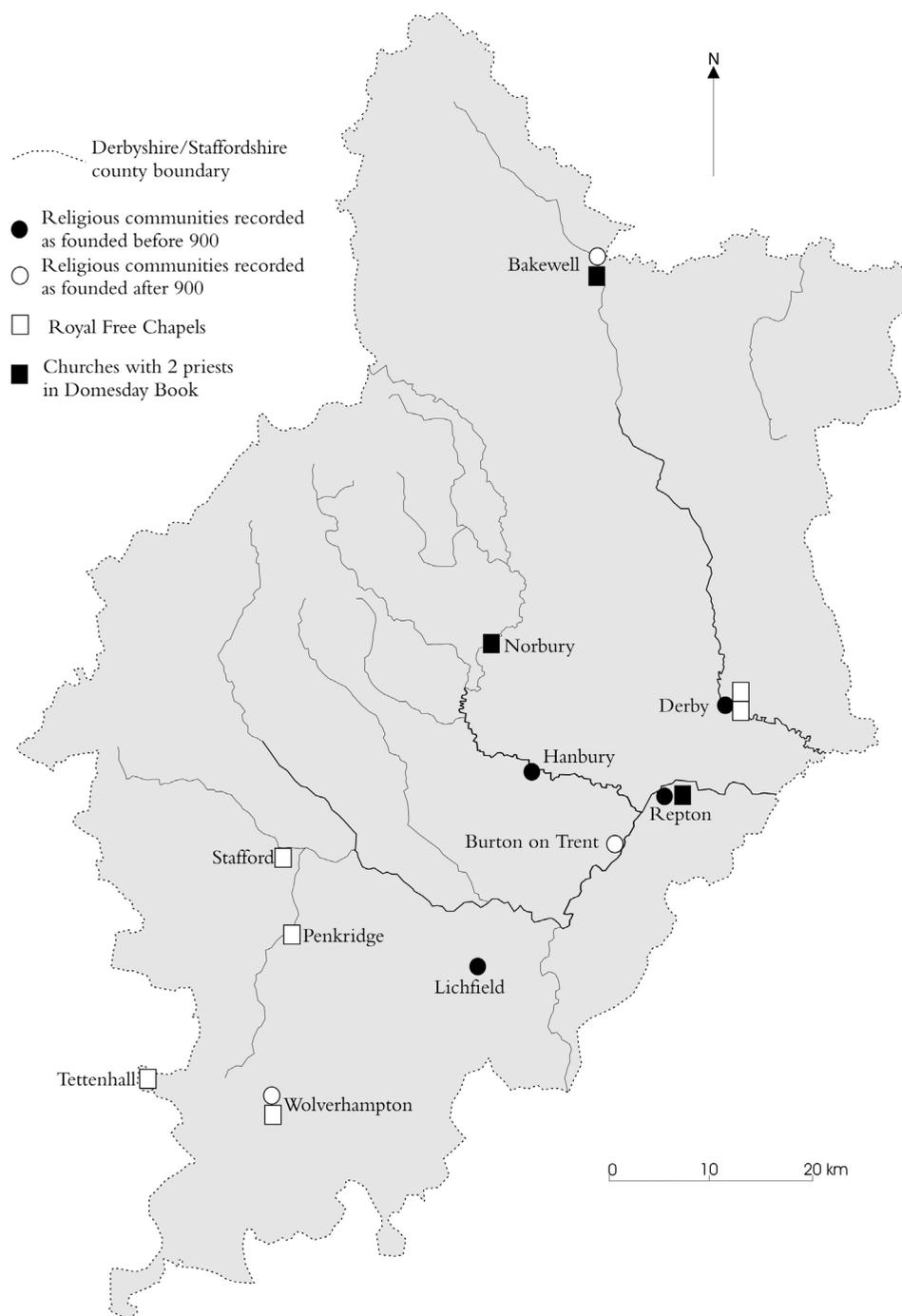


FIGURE 18

Categories of Anglo-Saxon religious house in Derbyshire and Staffordshire

*Note.* The Royal Free Chapels (with number of priests in Domesday Book in brackets where known):

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| St Alkmund's, Derby (6)                           | St Bertelin's, Stafford (13)      |
| All Saints, Derby (7)                             | Penkridge (9)                     |
| (the two Derby churches were a joint free chapel) | Tettenhall (no. not specified)    |
|   | Wolverhampton (no. not specified) |



Alstonefield, Ilam and Leek, are therefore potentially very significant for an area that is badly represented in the written record. It is notable though that many of the finds of sculpture are to be found in the

better recorded areas, that is, those that were most economically productive and so most likely to have been owned by kings and other patrons of high status.



