

## THE MOTHER CHURCH OF THATCHAM

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THE parochial organization of the English church with its general provision of one church and one priest for each village community was achieved by a long process of evolution from the primitive arrangements of the period of the Conversion. Over many centuries, and particularly from the late eighth to the twelfth, the mainly missionary organization of the early English church was gradually superseded by an organization based upon the village church. In the period of the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity and for some time afterwards the spiritual life of the people was centred not upon local village churches but upon a relatively small number of minster churches, each with a body of priests or priest-monks living some sort of communal or quasi-monastic life and each having as its extensive *parochia* a large area of countryside extending over several villages and hamlets. Some of these ancient minsters were also the seats of bishops and were later called cathedrals, while others incorporated a foundation of nuns, but whatever additional features individual minsters might have the common characteristic was the maintenance of a group of clergy to evangelise and serve the large *parochiae* dependent upon them. These churches were often of royal or episcopal foundation, they were richly endowed with lands and, as a natural consequence of their spiritual obligations, their priests were entitled to receive spiritual revenues from the whole of their *parochiae*. Compared with the multiplicity of village churches of later times, the minsters were very few in number and the districts which they served were very large, so that it was often the case that a layman's church, the church to which he looked for the satisfaction of his spiritual needs and to which he paid his ecclesiastical dues, was many miles distant from his home. This pattern did not, of

course, remain static. From the late eighth century onwards the tendency was for individual thegns to found and build smaller churches on their own estates to serve themselves and the local villagers. This development gathered momentum as the centuries passed and resulted in the gradual dissolution of the large *parochiae* of the ancient minsters. By the time of the Norman Conquest many villages were probably served in spiritualities each by its own church and its own priest, although despite the wealth of material in the Domesday Survey the exact number of churches in 1066 is not known. Much evolution and adjustment of parochial boundaries were to follow, especially in the north and west, but the trend toward village churches was clear.<sup>1</sup> The erection of village, or manorial, churches within the *parochia* of an old minster church broke up the unity of its *parochia* and, while relieving its clergy of some of their spiritual responsibilities, it also deprived them of part of their customary ecclesiastical revenue. A number of minsters eventually decayed, having fulfilled their original purpose of evangelisation and ministry and having been superseded as the principal spiritual force in their localities by the newer village churches. Some had a continuing life as cathedral churches, others were refounded as strictly monastic houses in the tenth century and later, but many settled down in the medieval period as parish churches of a familiar type with one priest and a smaller parish comprising the immediate locality only. However, even in former minster churches where the decay had gone thus far, their original status was often betrayed by certain characteristics and rights which they continued to enjoy: for example, a rich landed endowment and the receipt of some ecclesiastical revenues from surrounding parishes. By means of such

## THE MOTHER CHURCH OF THATCHAM

clues as these the historian may spot among the parish churches of medieval England those which had at one time enjoyed the status of a minster church and had probably played a crucial part in the early Christian history of their areas. This paper is concerned with a church of this type, that of Thatcham in Berkshire, which, when it first appears in surviving historical record, was about to complete the transition from minster church to ordinary parish church.

The church of Thatcham first appears in the Domesday Survey of 1086 when, with the manor of Thatcham, it belonged to the Crown.<sup>1a</sup> The manor of Thatcham was granted by Henry I to his new abbey at Reading between June 1121 and June 1123,<sup>2</sup> but the gift did not include the church, since it was then in the hands of the king's great justiciar, Roger, bishop of Salisbury. The bishop died late in 1139 (four years after Henry I) and, because he had not held the church as part of the bishopric of Salisbury, it reverted to the Crown. It remained in the Crown's possession until in 1141 the Empress Matilda, after the capture of King Stephen and her own recognition as *Domina* (or 'queen-designate') of the English, assumed the possessions and prerogatives of the Crown and conveyed the church to Reading Abbey in completion of her father's gift.<sup>3</sup> The grant was not a simple one, however, for the spirituality of Thatcham was somewhat complex and, as has been intimated, indicated an ancient minster church which was on the last stages of transition into little more than an ordinary parish church. The evidence for this lies in the large endowment of the church, the existence of more than one priest in the church in and after 1086, its dependent chapelries and extraneous claims in spiritualities, and, possibly, a link between the ecclesiastical and secular jurisdictions of the Domesday hundred of Thatcham.

In 1086 two clerks held the church of Thatcham with its large endowment of three hides. Moreover, they clearly possessed more independence than priests of manorial or village churches, since they paid their geld

separately from the manor and with the county.<sup>4</sup> The endowment of three hides, when the average amount of land belonging to an ordinary parish church was about one sixth of this,<sup>5</sup> suggests that at one time a community of priests was supported in the church, of whom the two Domesday clerks were the only survivors. In fact, on the strength of the Domesday notice, Mr William Page suggested that Thatcham was a 'small minster'.<sup>6</sup> He confined himself to the evidence of the Survey, however, whereas an examination of later evidence confirms his theory beyond doubt. It is clear that the existence of two priests in the church continued throughout the twelfth century, for it certainly obtained in 1201, when a charter to Reading Abbey by Herbert Poore, bishop of Salisbury, referred to two named priests serving Thatcham church, one holding two thirds of its possessions, the other one third. The bishop described them as 'perpetual vicars', but they cannot have been strictly this in a thirteenth-century sense, since they held their respective parts of the church for the payment of annual pensions to the abbey: Robert, the clerk of Thatcham, paid nine marks from his two thirds and Hugh of Burgundy 34s. 1d. from his one third.<sup>7</sup> Shortly afterwards the number of priests was reduced to one, when the third part of the church formerly held by Hugh of Burgundy was appropriated to the abbey,<sup>8</sup> so that the priest of the other portion became the sole rector of Thatcham.<sup>9</sup> At an earlier date the number of priests may well have been greater, for, although the parish of Thatcham with two dependent chapelries remained the same throughout the middle ages<sup>10</sup> and later, memories of an older more extensive *parochia* are clearly reflected in certain extra-parochial claims by Thatcham church in the thirteenth century.

Until the mid-nineteenth century the church of Thatcham possessed two dependent chapelries, at Midgham and Greenham, which are now separate parishes. The earliest definite notice of this occurs in the early fourteenth century, but the same state of affairs can be

inferred, at least in the case of one of the chapelries, at the date of Domesday. When Thatcham church was finally and completely appropriated to Reading Abbey in 1317, a perpetual vicarage was established by an episcopal ordinance which stipulated that the vicar and his successors must arrange for the church of Thatcham and its chapels at Midgham and Greenham to be served by fit priests as in times past and as had been incumbent formerly on the rector. Moreover, the same document gives the value of the church and chapels as 50 marks (£33 6s. 8d.) according to the current assessment.<sup>11</sup> This current assessment was the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV (1291) where the value of Thatcham church alone is given as £33 6s. 8d.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, then, in 1291 (and presumably earlier) a reference to the church of Thatcham was understood to include its dependent chapelries. In the Domesday Survey no mention is made of the spirituality of Midgham and the date of the foundation of this chapelry cannot be ascertained. On the other hand, the chapelry of Greenham had been formed by 1086, for Domesday records a church (*ecclesia*) there, but does not indicate its dependence on Thatcham.<sup>13</sup> Its description as a church is not fatal to the argument that it was then a dependent chapelry of Thatcham, for two reasons: firstly, Greenham 'church' has every appearance of a manorial establishment, being listed among the possessions of the demesne of Greenham, and may only recently have been created within the *parochia* of Thatcham;<sup>14</sup> secondly, if this was the case and Greenham still remained part of the *parochia*, considerable uncertainty might prevail as to its precise status, so that Domesday could equally well have recorded Greenham as a chapel.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, it is unlikely that an independent parish church in 1086 would have become by 1317 a dependent chapelry, for such would be the reverse of normal developments during the period. In short, the existence of a chapelry at Greenham dependent upon the church of Thatcham dates back at least to 1086.

In 1086, then, the parish of Thatcham

included Greenham and Midgham, but at an earlier date extended further, as appears in the thirteenth century when Reading Abbey, in the name of the church of Thatcham, advanced claims against neighbouring parishes. Two such cases are on record, against the churches of Newbury and West Hendred (Berkshire).

The church of Newbury is not mentioned in Domesday, but was in existence by 1086, for at about that time it was granted by the lord of Newbury to the abbey of Préaux in the diocese of Lisieux, Normandy.<sup>16</sup> The earliest notice of Reading Abbey's interest in the church occurs in the diocesan confirmation of its spiritualities granted by Herbert Poore, bishop of Salisbury, in 1201, which includes a payment of 2s. (per annum) from the church of Newbury.<sup>17</sup> Shortly afterwards a dispute between the abbeyes of Reading and Préaux reveals that this payment was made in recognition of Thatcham's ancient rights, as a minster or mother church, in the spirituality of Newbury. The dispute occurred between 1216 and 1226 and may have arisen because of a default in the annual payment. Reading took the case to Rome where it was committed by Pope Honorius III to judges-delegate in England, the abbot and prior of Waverley and the prior of Monk Sherborne, who heard it in the cathedral at Winchester. Reading claimed that the church of Newbury was situate within the *parochia* of Thatcham and, therefore, belonged to that church, and in consequence sought the ejection both of the abbot and convent of Préaux and of Gervase, their priest at Newbury. Préaux apparently offered no objection to Reading's claim that Newbury lay within Thatcham's *parochia*. In settlement of the case it was decided that the church of Thatcham should continue to receive the annual payment of 2s. from the church of Newbury as previously and that, in addition, the abbot and convent of Préaux should, *pro bono pacis*, pay 4s. 8d. annually to Reading which would absolve them from further claims from Thatcham church.<sup>18</sup> This case shows beyond doubt that the *parochia* of Thatcham had at some time included Newbury and that subsequently, by 1086, a

## THE MOTHER CHURCH OF THATCHAM

manorial church had been established there. However, the memory of Thatcham's rights had been preserved by the annual payment of 2s., which Reading may have appropriated by 1201, and was used by the abbey to enforce payment slightly later.<sup>19</sup> It is highly significant in this respect that Honorius III's original letter of commission to the judges-delegate, preserved in their account of the proceedings, describes Newbury church as a chapel.<sup>20</sup> Since Reading had made the appeal to Rome, it is clear that the monks chose to regard it as a chapel in order to strengthen their claim that it belonged to Thatcham.

The second case concerned the tithes of East Ginge in the parish of West Hendred. The manor and church of West Hendred were granted to St. Albans Abbey before 1086 and were passed on to its dependent priory at Wallingford shortly afterwards.<sup>21</sup> By the thirteenth century at the latest, Wallingford Priory claimed that East Ginge was in the parish of its church of West Hendred and was presumably receiving the tithes of East Ginge. The abbot and monks of Reading, however, were opposed to this, claiming that they and their church of Thatcham had been from time immemorial in possession of the demesne tithes of East Ginge. Wallingford took the case to Rome where it was committed by Honorius III to English judges-delegate, this time the abbot and prior of Waltham and the prior of Cathale, before whom in settlement of the dispute Wallingford renounced any right to the tithes in question, presumably in recognition of the just claims of Thatcham church; but it was agreed further that Wallingford would hold the tithes for an annual farm of 25s. payable to Reading.<sup>22</sup> The case had been ostensibly between Wallingford and the rector of Thatcham,<sup>23</sup> but Reading was present to safeguard its rights and the initiative probably came from that quarter. The important point is that Thatcham church had successfully advanced claims on the spirituality of East Ginge in West Hendred which Wallingford could not refute and which were accepted by the papal delegates. The only explanation

consistent with these facts is that, like Newbury, East Ginge had lain originally within the *parochia* of the mother church of Thatcham.

These are the only recorded cases of this kind, but it is possible that the mother church's *parochia* originally extended even further. Although the whole question must be treated with extreme caution, there may be grounds for suggesting that there was at one time some connection between the *parochia* of Thatcham church and the old hundred of Thatcham. In 1086 the royal manor of Thatcham was the administrative centre for the hundred of Thatcham.<sup>24</sup> The hundred of Thatcham was to disappear during the twelfth century in the gradual redrawing of the hundreds of central-southern Berkshire and Thatcham itself passed into the reconstructed hundred of Reading which comprised the lands in the area held by Reading Abbey.<sup>25</sup> In 1086 the hundred of Thatcham comprised Thatcham, Crookham, Greenham, Midgham, Newbury (*Uluritone*), East Ginge (*Acenge*),<sup>26</sup> Curridge, Donnington (*Deritone*),<sup>27</sup> Brimpton, Shaw, Bagnor, Speen and Wasing. Of these, Crookham was and is in the parish of Thatcham; Greenham and Midgham were dependent chapelries until 1857;<sup>28</sup> and Newbury and East Ginge had lain within Thatcham's original *parochia*. We have no evidence of any claim by the church of Thatcham in the seven remaining places.<sup>29</sup> The interesting fact which emerges, however, is that all the places where Thatcham church had spiritual rights of some kind belonged to the hundred of Thatcham in 1086. Mr Page has analysed the information on churches recorded in Domesday and has concluded that in the central and western parts of southern England it was often the case that in each hundred the main church was situated in the hundredal manor or other administrative centre and served the whole hundred.<sup>30</sup> To make such a pronouncement on the basis of Domesday material is a treacherous undertaking, for the Survey is notoriously unreliable in its recording of churches, but the evidence collected by Mr Page presents at least a good case for examining the problem, if not for

subscribing wholly to Professor Barlow's comment that apparently 'at one time there had usually been one minster for each hundred or group of hundreds.'<sup>31</sup> An interesting charter of 1121-1136 adds support to the idea of a mother church of a hundred, in this case (strangely enough) in the west midlands where Page found no trace of a hundredal organization. The charter is by Herbert, abbot of Westminster, in favour of the abbey church of Pershore (Worcestershire), *que mater est ecclesia hundredi*, regarding its spiritual rights in the hundred of Pershore.<sup>32</sup> Certainly, then, the term 'mother church of a hundred' was known in the twelfth century and may have been similarly current at an earlier date. Seen in this light, the church of Thatcham looks as though it may at one time have been the mother church which served the entire hundred of Thatcham. If this reconstruction of the church's past is correct, its original *parochia* had so decayed by 1086 as to be almost irrecoverable by the historian, while the seven places in the hundred for which the church put forward no subsequent claim as a mother church were by then fully independent of its ecclesiastical authority. There is a difficulty here, however, for, whereas we have suggested that the church of Thatcham with its *parochia* was of early foundation, perhaps in the seventh century, the generally accepted date for the creation of the secular hundredal organization of Wessex lies in the tenth century. The hundred, as a unit of local administration and justice, is not referred to by name until the third quarter of the tenth century and, according to Sir Frank Stenton, 'there is no direct evidence of its existence before the reign of Edmund' (939-946).<sup>33</sup> The difficulty is more apparent than real, however, for it is not improbable that in Wessex, unlike the midlands, the hundredal boundaries of the tenth century were much the same as those of earlier governmental areas and that what was new in the tenth century was the word and the uniformity of organization rather than the creation of new artificial areas which had little to do with older divisions.<sup>34</sup> The Domesday hundred of

Thatcham may well have been no more than an adaptation of a previous governmental division dating back to the time when Thatcham's church was first established or even earlier.

Whether or not the *parochia* at one time comprised the whole hundred of Thatcham, there can be no doubt regarding Thatcham's earlier status as a minster church. The subsequent decline of the church finds interesting parallels in other aspects of the history of Thatcham. Before the 1120's the place was a royal vill and the hundredal manor of the hundred of Thatcham, but these administrative responsibilities it lost in the twelfth century.<sup>35</sup> Economically, too, Thatcham declined during the middle ages. The Domesday account of Thatcham refers to twelve *hage* rendering to the farm a total of 55 shillings,<sup>36</sup> implying that a small town existed within the manor. This is corroborated by later evidence preserved in the cartularies of Reading Abbey that there was a weekly market in Thatcham which was certainly in existence in the reign of Henry I. In 1153 Duke Henry (later Henry II) instructed the men of Berkshire to resort to the abbot of Reading's market at Thatcham as in the time of his grandfather;<sup>37</sup> and as king he forbade the men of Newbury to interfere with the monks in the enjoyment of their Sunday market in Thatcham.<sup>38</sup> The market was confirmed again by Richard I and in 1222 Henry III granted an annual fair at Thatcham,<sup>39</sup> but in fact Thatcham was being increasingly overtaken in economic and commercial matters by Newbury, situated a very few miles further up the River Kennet. The borough of Thatcham continued to exist until the nineteenth century,<sup>40</sup> but the place was for most of the period little more than a large village. Newbury, its younger and more vital neighbour, whose competition was already damaging to the Thatcham market in the 1150's, soon outstripped it. In ecclesiastical affairs something similar can be seen, for when the rural deanery of the area was formed it was not that of Thatcham (which one might have

## THE MOTHER CHURCH OF THATCHAM

expected after the decay of a mother church), but the rural deanery of Newbury.

### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> c.f. F. M. Stenton, 'St. Frideswide and her Times,' *Oxoniensia*, i (1936), 110-111.
- <sup>1a</sup> *Victoria County History, Berkshire I*, 327.
- <sup>2</sup> The manor was included in Henry I's charter of foundation of 1125 (spurious in its present form), but it had already been granted to the monks by June 1123 when it was mentioned in Pope Calixtus II's bull to Reading Abbey. The earliest surviving copy of the foundation charter is in British Museum Egerton MS 3031, f. 13. For the papal bull, see W. Holtzmann, *Papsturkunden in England*, III (Göttingen, 1952), No. 9.
- <sup>3</sup> Egerton 3031, f. 15v. The Empress is not styled 'Lady of the English', but the grant belongs to the year 1141, since (a) Miles the Constable, who appears among the witnesses, is not styled earl of Hereford, which he was created on 25 July 1141; and (b) Bishop Roger's successor in the see of Salisbury, the addressee of the charter, was Jocelin de Bohun who was consecrated not earlier than 1141.
- <sup>4</sup> *V.C.H. Berks*, I, 327. Manorial priests, if they are mentioned at all in Domesday, tend to be listed with the peasant community or among the possessions of the demesne. See R. Lennard, *Rural England 1086-1135* (Oxford, 1959), 310-12 and 329: 'Taken as a whole, the evidence of Domesday Book leaves one with the impression that the village priest was usually reckoned to be a member of the peasant community'.
- <sup>5</sup> See F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1943), 152: 'In the parts of England where ancient arrangements were undisturbed by Danish settlement, and particularly in Wessex and western Mercia, the glebe of an ordinary parish church seems as a rule to have approximated to two yardlands'.
- <sup>6</sup> W. Page, 'Some Remarks on the Churches of the Domesday Survey', *Archaeologia*, LXVI (1915), 78.
- <sup>7</sup> Egerton 3031, f. 95v; printed, S. Barfield, *Thatcham, Berks, and its Manors* (Oxford and London, 1901), II, 53.
- <sup>8</sup> B. M. Harley MS. 1708, f. 191v. This is a mandate to the archdeacon of Berkshire from the same bishop of Salisbury and it refers to an earlier provision by the bishop's predecessor. The latter is contained in a charter to Reading Abbey by Hubert Walter, bishop of Salisbury (1189-93), which allows that when the churches of Thatcham and Bucklebury fall vacant they may be appropriated to the use of the hospital before the gate of the abbey (*Ibid.*, f. 191v). Both documents are printed, Barfield, *op. cit.*, II, 54, 50.
- <sup>9</sup> He was so described, for example, in a document of 1216-27 (Harley 1708, f. 193).
- <sup>10</sup> At the Dissolution, Reading Abbey held the rectory of Thatcham with Greenham, Midgham, Crookham and Colthrop (J. B. Hurry, *Reading Abbey* (London, 1901), 88). In 1476 the monk in charge of tailoring in the abbey (to whom Thatcham had been assigned) rendered account for the tithes of corn in Colthrop, Midgham, Crookham and Greenham and for the farmed tithes of corn in Thatcham and Henwick (B.M. Additional Roll 19657). He also rendered account for mortuaries received in Crookham, Colthrop, Henwick and Thatcham; and had, since Michaelmas 1475, re-roofed with tiles the chapel of Greenham (*Ibid.*).
- <sup>11</sup> Barfield, *op. cit.*, II, p. 73: '... quod dictus vicarius et sui successores . . . suis sumptibus ecclesie de Thacham et capellis eidem annexis de Migham videlicet et de Grenham per idoneos presbiteros prout retroactis temporibus fieri consuevit congrue deserviri faciant in divinis quatenus ad hoc tenebatur antiquitus loci rector'.
- <sup>12</sup> *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae auctoritate P. Nicholai IV* (Record Commission, 1802), 187.
- <sup>13</sup> *V.C.H. Berks*, I, 347.
- <sup>14</sup> See F. Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066* (London, 1963), 188.
- <sup>15</sup> See Lennard, *op. cit.*, 298.
- <sup>16</sup> *V.C.H. Berks*, IV, 150.
- <sup>17</sup> Egerton 3031, f. 96v: 'Confirmamus etiam eisdem monachis in ecclesia de Niweb. duos solidos'.
- <sup>18</sup> Harley 1708, f. 193 (the report of the judges-delegate) and f. 197 (the chirograph between Reading and Préaux); both printed, Barfield, *op. cit.* II, 56-7. Reading was now taking an active interest in the relations between the churches of Thatcham and Newbury, because the abbot and convent had recently appropriated one third of Thatcham.
- <sup>19</sup> The payment of 2s. was still being made to Thatcham in 1291 (*Taxatio*, 187), but later notices have not been found. The abbey of Préaux continued to render the annual 4s. 8d. to Reading until its Berkshire possessions and responsibilities were granted to Witham Priory in Somerset (*V.C.H., Berks*, IV, 151) which was making the payment as late as 1475 (B.M. Cotton Vespasian E v, f. 66v: this is a copy of the receipt made out by the almoner of Reading to the prior of 'Selwood'. Selwood is apparently an alternative name for Witham, since there was no other prior of Selwood to whom the document could refer).
- <sup>20</sup> Harley 1708, f. 193: 'Honorius (etc.). Dilecti filii abbas et conventus de Rading. nobis conquerendo monstrarunt quod abbas et conventus de Pratellis et G. clericus Sar. diocesis super capella Neubir. et rebus aliis iniuriantur eisdem'.
- <sup>21</sup> *V.C.H. Berks*, IV, 303, 307; J. G. Milne, 'Muniments of Holy Trinity Priory, Wallingford', *Oxoniensia*, v (1940), 52-56.

- <sup>28</sup> Harley 1708, f. 193 (the report of the judges-delegate) and f. 193v (the charter by the prior of Wallingford); both printed, Barfield, *op. cit.* II, 57-8.
- <sup>29</sup> I.e., the priest who held the two thirds of Thatcham church not yet appropriated to Reading Abbey.
- <sup>30</sup> See H. Cam, 'Manerium cum Hundredo: the Hundred and the Hundredal Manor', *Liberties and Communities in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1944), 69, where are given examples of hundreds attached to manors. Professor Cam writes: 'Another fact which emerges as we go backwards is that the manors to which hundreds are attached are very frequently ancient demesne manors'. See also *Ibid.*, 84-89.
- <sup>31</sup> See *V.C.H. Berks*, III, 275-6, and IV, 38-9.
- <sup>32</sup> The Domesday *Acenge* has apparently been unidentifiable hitherto and the Berkshire *V.C.H.* states that East Ginge is not mentioned in Domesday (IV, 304). However, there are good reasons for identifying the Domesday *Acenge* with East Ginge. In 1086 a thegn called Cola held an estate in East Hendred (adjacent to West Hendred in which parish East Ginge lies) and an estate in *Acenge*. Cola's East Hendred estate was later known as Framptons and is probably represented by the modern Frampton's Farm (*V.C.H. Berks*, IV, 299), in the south of the parish of East Hendred. East Ginge lies in the south of the parish of West Hendred, which lies exactly parallel to that of East Hendred. In other words, East Ginge and Framptons are roughly adjacent and, since we know Cola held the latter in 1086, it is very likely that *Acenge* which he held in 1086 is to be identified with East Ginge.
- <sup>33</sup> For this identification, see *V.C.H. Berks*, IV, 91.
- <sup>34</sup> *V.C.H. Berks*, III, 326.
- <sup>35</sup> In 1086 Brimpton had two churches and Speen one (the latter not noticed by Page, *ubi supra*, 78). Curridge eventually formed part of the parish of Chieveley (not in the Domesday hundred of Thatcham) and Bagnor part of that of Speen; Shaw-cum-Donnington and Wasing constituted separate parishes.
- <sup>36</sup> Page, *ubi supra*, 66: '... from the evidence of the parts of Domesday relating to some of the Wessex counties, churches are recorded at the hundred boroughs or manors or other administrative centres which are very frequently the only churches entered in the survey under such hundreds. Consequently it may perhaps be concluded that in this part of the country one church originally served the district dependent upon such an administrative centre, and became the mother church to the churches subsequently built there, the subsidiary churches being in some instances served from it'. Examples are given *passim* pp. 67-82.
- <sup>37</sup> Barlow, *op. cit.*, 184.
- <sup>38</sup> Public Record Office, E 210/2018 (Ancient Deed D 2018): 'H. abbas Westmon' omnibus hominibus suis francis et anglis de tenetura Persore et de hundredo, salutem. Mando vobis. et precipio ex parte dei et sancti Petri et ex mea, quatinus sicut diligitis quicquid de sancto Petro et de me tenetis et super salutem animarum vestrarum omnes rectitudines et conseutudines quas ecclesia sancte Marie et sancte Eadburge de Persora que mater est ecclesia hundredi habere solebat temporibus antecessorum meorum per omnia illi reddatis et persolvatis, in decimis scilicet et elemosinis et in omnibus aliis servitiis quae eidem ecclesie debetis, iuste et sine tumultu et absque ulla contradictione per (*sic*) salute animarum vestrarum reddatis. Ita ut inde vobis grates sciam et pro beneficiis vestris apud deum habeatis mercedem. Et precipio ne a quoquam magistro quem super vos habeatis de hoc proficuo animarum vestrarum et rectitudine illius matris ecclesia ullo tempore disturbemini vel aliquod contradicium fiat. Valete'.
- The text has been given in full, since it is not included in Pierre Chaplais' edition of the surviving charters of this abbot in 'The Original Charters of Herbert and Gervase Abbots of Westminster (1121-1157)', *A Medieval Miscellany for D. M. Stenton* (Pipe Roll Soc., lxxiv, 1962). Dr Chaplais has kindly given the present writer his opinion that this is a genuine original charter of Abbot Herbert.
- In 1151-57 John (of Pagham), bishop of Worcester, confirmed to Pershore two parts of all tithes in the hundred of Pershore and other benefits which had been conceded by Abbot Gilbert Crispin of Westminster (P.R.O. E 315/vol 61-Pershore Cartulary-f. 104v).
- <sup>39</sup> F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 289-90.
- <sup>40</sup> Many of the hundreds met at places whose names point to their having been used for assemblies from ancient times and Mr Eric John has recently suggested that the hundred was basically a very primitive institution indeed, whose origins may have lain in the early subdivision of the shire for military purposes. ('English Feudalism and the Structure of Anglo-Saxon Society', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 1963-64, pp. 28-9).
- <sup>41</sup> Thatcham may well have ceased to be the hundredal manor before it was given to Reading Abbey (i.e., by 1123), since the hundred of Thatcham was not included in the royal grant, although on the analogy of Reading and Leominster one would expect it to have been if it was still an appurtenance of the manor.
- <sup>42</sup> *V.C.H. Berks*, I, 327.
- <sup>43</sup> Egerton 3031, f. 26v.

## THE MOTHER CHURCH OF THATCHAM

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., f. 26v.

<sup>39</sup> Respectively, Egerton 3031, f. 28v; *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum* (Record Commission, 1833-44), vol. I, p. 486.

<sup>40</sup> *V.C.H. Berks*, III, 312. It is interesting that Thatcham retained its borough status throughout the middle ages. It was always reckoned as such in the medieval Lay Subsidy Rolls, whereas New-

bury was always in these rolls reckoned with the county. Only four boroughs in Berkshire were treated separately from the county—Reading, Thatcham, Windsor and Wallingford—and their assessments reveal the insignificance of Thatcham compared with the other three. See, for example, the roll for 48 Edward III (P.R.O., E 179/73/39).