
Abbot Martin's Legacy: the 'new town' at Peterborough and the origins of St John's Church

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This paper proposes a revised understanding of the origins of the town of Peterborough from that hitherto current among archaeologists and historians, and which originated, effectively, in the 17th century. In those narratives, an old town – marked by the settlement of Bondgate and the church of old St John's – lay to the north-east of the abbey precinct, and Abbot Martin of Bec (1133-1155) created a new town against the west side of the precinct, thereby shifting the settlement's focal core and its future history. In contrast to this, we argue that the area west of the abbey was long-established as an ancient place of congregation of a typical early medieval type; that old St John's was a former component of the early monastery at Peterborough, 'reformed' to become a parish church in the 12th century; and that Bondgate was itself a new settlement created for the abbey's servile population, as the name declares, by Abbot Martin. The several actions attributed to Martin are identified topographically and their overall coherence and important impact on the town's topography are clarified. We explore the circumstances behind the removal of parochial responsibility from old St John's to new St John's on the market square and suggest a role for the chapel of St Thomas Becket, situated adjacent to the abbey gate, in that context. We note the relationship of this revised understanding of the town's development to our separate forthcoming paper about the early history of the abbey, the church of St Margaret at Fletton and the so-called Radulfus cross at Fletton.

Introduction

Hugh Candidus's well-known and much-quoted account of Martin of Bec's notable initiatives while abbot of Peterborough tells us that:

"In ecclesia et in aliis officinis et in pluribus locis semper operabatur. et portam monasterii et mercatum et portum nauium et uillam multo melius mutauit. et multa emendauit" (Karn and King forthcoming, in the orthography to be adopted there; Mellows 1949, 122).

Contemporary and later versions of this passage chose to emphasise different aspects of this range of initiatives or to add others:

'Amongst all these difficulties he undertook (building) works in the church and in the obediences, and he transformed the town, and did much work there,

and he finished the chancel of the abbey church...' (Mellows 1949, 105, translated E King; for Mellows' own translation, see Mellows 1980, 57).

In the vernacular of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 'E' version, *sub anno* 1137, precisely contemporary with Hugh Candidus:

'And he made many monks, and planted a vineyard, and did much building, and altered the village making it better than it had ever been before' (Irvine 2004, 135; Clark 1970, 57; translated Whitelock 1961, 200).

Whitelock actually translates the OE '*tun*' here as 'village'; like Hugh's '*villa*' it has the neutral sense – free of connotations of size, status or topographical arrangement – conveyed by the English term 'settlement'.

And:

'He destroyed the castle [next the church]. He moved the market-place. He built a vineyard. He erected two buildings, the abbot's chamber and a hall for his household' (Swaffham Continuation; with '*iuxta ecclesiam*' added by Whittlesey; Mellows 1949, 173).

Inevitably, historians have sought to understand what Hugh is saying by close analysis and comparison of these texts alone; as if that will provide certitude. In that ambition, however, we need to acknowledge that Hugh Candidus was writing educated, literary Latin, through which context and motivation was as much implied as explicitly stated. For example – as Malasree Home has neatly argued – a phrase like 'amongst all these difficulties' ('*hiis tribulationibus*') serves to contrast the good order within the monastery at Peterborough during the civil war of Stephen's reign with the disorder outside (Home 2015, 88–91). When, in the first passage quoted above, Hugh lists a string of features and applies to them the verb *mutare*, it is unnecessarily mechanistic – in seeking his meaning – to suppose that it has the rather specific meaning in each case of 'change the position of' or the technical horticultural 'transplant' (*DMLBS s.v. mutare* 6), attractive though that might seem. Surely Hugh might have written a different, more precisely appropriate, verb for each activity; but instead – more economically and elegantly – chose a word of broad

meaning which applied satisfactorily and flexibly to each. In addition, he deploys the standard Latin *'et ... et ... et'* for a list, which in English might be rendered 'both ... and ... and', or more idiomatically by a colon and a list. So, a translation of the passage might run:

'In the church and in other monastery buildings and in numerous places he continually undertook works; he changed the monastic gatehouse, the market, the ships' landing-place, the town much for the better; and he undertook many improvements'.

For 'changed', a similarly non-specific word such as 'altered' or 're-organised' might serve. In short, the documentary record – for all that it signals clearly that Martin's activities were striking, visible, fundamental – does not, cannot alone, reveal the specifics of what he did. Or even what the arrangements were that he so improved. To understand that, we set out in this essay to bring archaeological and topographical evidence to the fore, and to propose that there was a coherence and inter-relationship and efficacy to Martin's agenda, which made it truly notable in the eyes of contemporaries and gave it permanent impact.

Long-standing common consent in historical and archaeological narrative has seen this as the key episode in the development of the medieval town of Peterborough. Hugh's account has been understood to show that the establishment of the core of the medieval town was an initiative of Abbot Martin of Bec (1133–1155), which he achieved by creating today's market place, on the west side of the abbey precinct, outside the Abbey's new gatehouse, that now faced towards it. The survival in Peterborough's modern topography of a large open market square of classic form to the west of the abbey and later cathedral precinct, lined on its north and south sides with rows of urban properties in the form of typical medieval burgage plots, and forming the core of the town's medieval and post-medieval plan, appears to confirm Hugh's account (Hall 2019 for a useful recent summary of received understanding and of the main points at issue in what follows here). On the square stands the parish church of Peterborough, dedicated to St John the Baptist – a vicarage, whose advowson was held by the abbey and latterly by the Dean and Chapter of the cathedral. Its presence in this location, however, dates only from the early 15th century.

Historical accounts of Peterborough have for long spoken, on the basis of this combination of documentation and topography, of Abbot Martin's creation of a 'new town' at Peterborough. And this simple observation has been elaborated by the proposition that there was an 'old town', superseded but not eliminated by Abbot Bec's initiative, that was located to the north-east of the abbey's medieval precinct, on the edge of the Fen. This was the settlement focus called from the 13th century 'Bondgate' from the north-south street that formed its principal element, with an open market space at Bondgate Hook or Bungate Hoole – so identified and named by Speed – at its southern end (Fig. 1, Plate 1) (Mellows *et al.* 1954, 33n, 55 and

n, 122n etc; Speed 1611, 55–56). Goods were presumably landed at the fen edge a little to the south-east and brought up via the lanes that enter the settlement from that direction. A critical factor in the proposition that the Bondgate district represents an earlier town, prior to Abbot Martin's reforms, is the location of 'old' St John's church beyond the southern end of Bondgate, which was clearly documented in diocesan records as the parish church of Peterborough parish from the early 13th century until it was demolished soon after 1400. At that time its functions were transferred to the new church with the same dedication built *de novo* on Peterborough market square. One suggestion why this removal of St John's might have been necessary in the early 15th century was that its ancient location was inconvenient for the bulk of its parishioners. The same presumption has also been advanced for the erstwhile removal of the 'old town' itself, to the 'new town', in the 12th century. It, too, seems to have become somehow inconveniently located. In recent times, archaeologists have elaborated and given support to this model of shifting town locations; for example, by identifying the triangular footprint of a presumed open space, filled in by later properties, at the heart of the Bondgate settlement. This was, supposedly, the market place of the early town (Mackreth 1999, 144–5).

The simplicity of this model – of an old town moved to a new site by Martin of Bec – was substantially undermined nearly forty years ago, however, by Edmund King's seminal paper on the earliest documentation for the town of Peterborough (King 1980–81; see also Beresford and Finberg 1973, 142). King convincingly demonstrated that there were already 18 burgesses and burgesse properties in the 1120s and a minimum recorded population of mixed status of 172. And when he compared that with a list of tenancies in Bondgate in *c.* 1400, his conclusion was that there were simply too many individuals named at the earlier date for them all to have been resident at Bondgate. He suggested that there must have been, already in the early 12th century, a substantial urban population – some holding by burgage tenure – elsewhere at Peterborough. Probably, he proposed, this would have been in the location west of the abbey where Martin of Bec subsequently developed his market place.

In this paper, then, we wish to use archaeological and morphological analysis to support King's proposal, and to extend it further. We wish to propose that, far from being the 'old town' of Peterborough, Bondgate was a new creation by Martin of Bec, as part of – or as an immediate consequence of – his memorable suite of planning initiatives. In a complementary manner, we propose, 'old' St John's church was not 'the ancient parish church' of Peterborough, but was rather a chapel of the abbey that was transformed into a parish church during the 12th century. It was, we suggest, a newly created vicarage, with the advowson held by the abbey, as an integral part of, or an immediate consequence of, this same large-scale initiative by Abbot Martin.

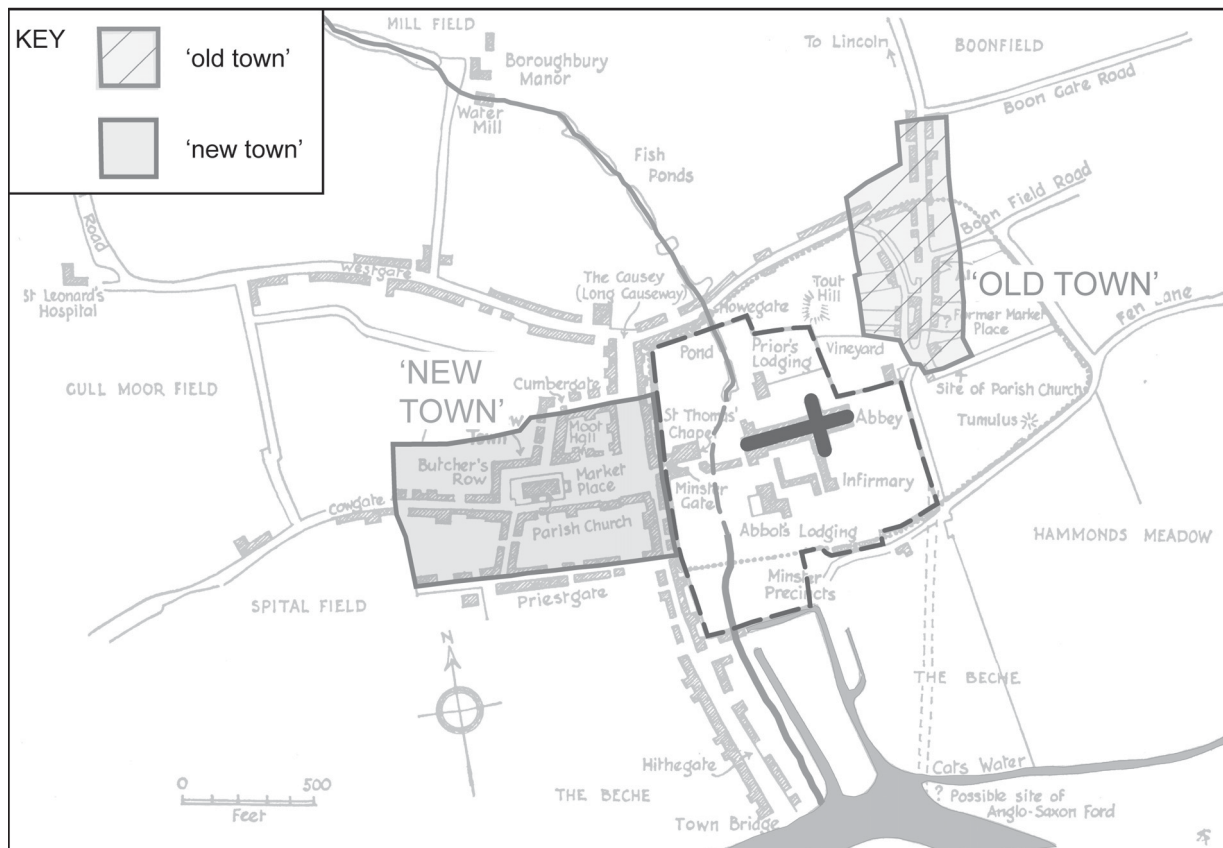


Figure 1. Peterborough: the received view of a 'new' and an 'old' town; based on Steane 1974, Fig. 10, which was compiled from a map by W T Mellows, now in the Dean and Chapter library, and other features from Thomas Eayre's town plan of 1721. Drawing P Everson. See also Plate 1.

In a separate paper, alongside Jackie Hall, cathedral archaeologist at Peterborough, we have explored the origins and topography of the great early abbey of *Medeshamstede*, highlighting the role of Fletton, as one of only two possessions of Peterborough Abbey on the Huntingdonshire side of the Nene (the other was Alwalton), in that early development (Everson *et al.* forthcoming). Those wide-ranging explorations have caused us to notice a number of key, place-defining, topographical factors in the Peterborough landscape (Fig. 2, Plate 2):

- the presence and ritual significance of a deep pool in the river, alongside which *Medeshamstede* was founded;
- the presence of an embayment on the south side of the Nene, at Fletton (as the place-name signals);
- the probability of a strand or beaching point for ships on the north bank of the Nene, alongside or just downstream of the pool;
- the importance and antiquity of a crossing point of the Nene, just upstream of the pool and roughly where the later-medieval and modern bridge were sited;
- the long-established existence of a traditional place of congregation on either side of this crossing point, (remarkably) part in Northamptonshire part in Huntingdonshire;

- the way in which the network of long-established long-distance routeways connecting Peterborough to surrounding centres delivered travellers from the south of the Nene to the established crossing point, and from the north to the space to the west of the abbey later occupied by the town centre and market (Fig. 3).

For us, a number of these developments point strongly to the area west of the abbey site – although separated from it by a north-south watercourse – as a strong candidate for one of those early, pre-urban places of seasonal congregation that occur throughout western Europe, often as adjuncts of ritual locations (Sawyer 1981, Pestell and Ulmschneider 2003, Semple and Sanmark 2013). On the basis of parallels, this area west of the abbey is a likely place for the first 'town' at Peterborough to come into being; a suitable pre-history for the developments described by Edmund King in the 11th century (Fig. 4, Plate 3).

Abbot Martin's initiatives

When Abbot Martin of Bec made his famous amendments to the plan of the town of Peterborough at the abbey gates sometime between 1133 and 1155, there-

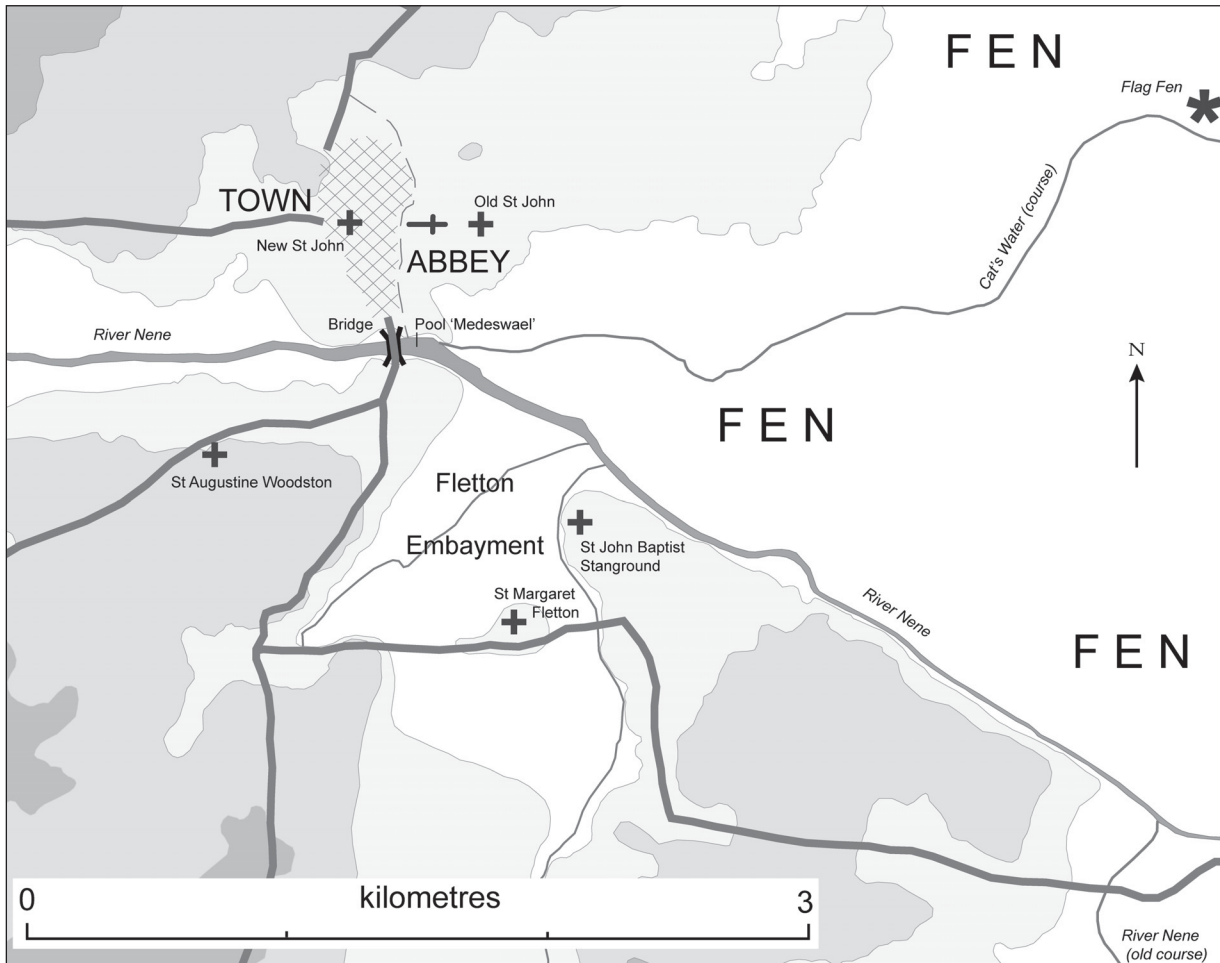


Figure 2. The setting of Peterborough Abbey and town. Drawing P Everson. See also Plate 2.

fore, we suggest that he was dealing in part with an ancient place of congregation, located north and south of the ancient crossing place of the Nene, and on the highly-accessible west side of the monastic precinct. An associated beaching place probably also existed on the north bank of the Nene, to the east of the established crossing place and pool (see below). This beach would have been the focus of Hereward's notorious raid of 1070 (Mellows 1949, 78, 79, 80, 83; Whitelock 1961, 150–153; Irvine 2004, *sub anno* 1070), and the reason for the perceived primacy of the abbey's Bulhithe Gate. This, then, was the topographical context for Abbot Martin's initiatives and it provides an appropriate context for Edmund King's authoritative demonstration, from documentary evidence, that Martin must have been developing the early stages of a medieval town that already existed in this same location, west of the monastery – where there were already 18 burgesses and burgess properties in the 1120s and a minimum recorded population of mixed status of 172 (King 1980–81). Mellows (1939, xviii–xxi) also attributes the initiation of an urban community – a mesne borough, known in 1125 as 'the vill of Burgh' – to Abbot Ernulph (1108–14).

The received date of the surviving west gate of the

precinct, however, places it later in the 12th century, as the work of Abbot Benedict (1177–1194), rather than as one of the consequences of Abbot Martin's initiatives (Gunton 1686, 26; O'Brien and Pevsner 2014, 614). For Peter Fergusson, both the architectural detailing of its entry passage and outer arch, with direct analogies at Canterbury, and its context as part of a suite of judicial buildings, identify this gatehouse with Martin's illustrious successor (Fergusson 2019, 184). Set against Peter Fergusson's arguments, however, we might point to the gatehouse's enriched scallop capitals, and indeed the simple thick mouldings on gate-arch and interior blind arcades, which may have looked old-fashioned, even by 1177 (Fig. 5). In a different context, such decorative details might imply a construction date during the abbacy of Martin of Bec. Nevertheless, the 'V'-shaped forms introduced into the scallops, their playfulness in scallop size and dimensions, and their elaborated astragals, are all also found in Don Mackreth's 'third phase' of work on the monastic nave a hundred yards to the east (Mackreth 2015). Similar capital details are all found in the nave north doorway, in the western piers in the north arcade, in the tribune and clerestory, and in the vault responds at the west end of the north

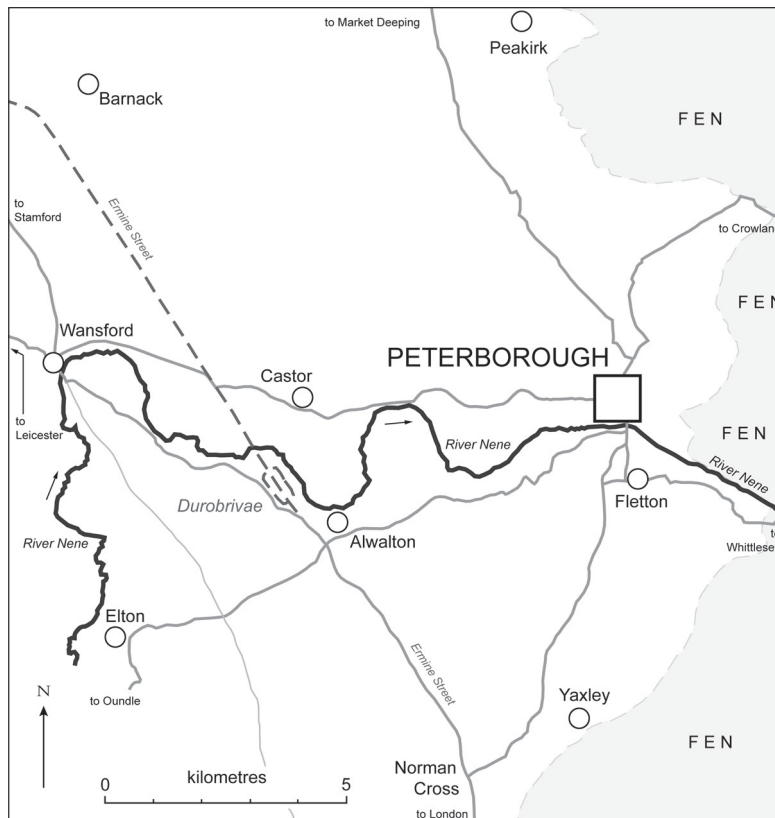


Figure 3. Established routeway networks servicing Peterborough; based on the historic county mapping of Thomas Jefferys Huntingdonshire (1768) and Thomas Eyre Northamptonshire, revised Jefferys (1779). Drawing P Everson.

aisle. Indeed, there is one capital in the blind arcade along the north nave aisle wall that reproduces the doubled 'V' shapes in the scallops' necks set above the pelleted astragal, that are also seen on the inner capital in the north jamb of the western gatehouse arch. The two capitals are so close in detailing they could have been carved by the same individual. This clear connection in architectural detailing with the 'third phase' of the nave means that any suggestion that the gatehouse was first erected by Abbot Martin would imply a challenge, also, to the dating and attribution of the different phases of work in the nave, as defined by Mackreth, and elaborated upon by many others. Mackreth allocates this 'third phase' of work on the nave to Abbot Benedict. In support of this attribution, Eric Fernie observes that one of the capitals in this phase of work takes a crocketed form, which he suggests implies a date following the reconstruction of the choir at Canterbury, following the 1174 fire there, with which project Benedict had been in contact during his residence there (Fernie 2019, 174). Peter Fergusson also comments on the co-existence of archaic-looking architectural forms alongside much more up-to-date ones in this phase of work on the Peterborough nave (Fergusson 2019, 185–191). Mackreth's, Fernie's and Fergusson's attribution of this phase of work in the nave to Abbot Benedict is strengthened by the apparently explicit reference to Abbot Benedict completing the nave of the church in stone and wood from the crossing tower to the (first) west front, that is contained in the Continuation of the Abbey Chronicle, written less than a century after

the work it reports (Sparke 1723, 99).

Any proposal that the lower stages of the existing gatehouse owe their origin to Abbot Martin conflicts, therefore, with both the documentary and the architectural evidence, as elucidated by a string of notable scholars. We still believe, however, that there remain good topographical reasons to support Hugh Candidus's statement, that Abbot Martin constructed a new gatehouse on this same site, facing the market. And so we find ourselves agreeing with Harriet Mahood's suggestion that, whilst the present gatehouse belongs to the phase of the abbey's aggrandisement and reconstruction under Abbot Benedict, there had been a previous gatehouse constructed in the modern location only a few years previously by Abbot Martin (Mahood 2019, 203). Whether it was of wood, as Mahood suggests, remains unclear. A study of the gatehouse's phasing might reveal much the same length of construction and complexity as the monastic nave, but it has not yet been attempted. Yet it seems certain that Benedict's gatehouse adapted an earlier structure and extended it southwards, in a development that partly involved construction of a court house fronting Bridge Street, known as the 'King's Hall'. In any event, such a conservative reconstruction and development of Martin's earlier work at the gatehouse, by Benedict, would represent a similarly sympathetic gesture to his extension and reconstruction of the half-finished nave of the abbey church.

In front of a new main gate (whether the one whose ground floor survives, or a predecessor to it),



Figure 4. Peterborough: alternative view of the pre-Martin topography; based on Steane 1974, Fig. 10. Drawing P Everson. See also Plate 3.



Figure 5. Scallop capitals on north and south jambs of the outer arch of the western gate-house of Peterborough Abbey. Photographs D Stocker.

Martin formally founded a market square, whose open space, lying east-west, defined the later medieval and early modern morphology of the town (Fig. 6, Plate 4). Recent excavations have investigated this open space and have identified a complex sequence of market-square surfaces and key features, including reportedly the base structure of a market cross (Morris 2017). It seems unlikely that, in making these changes, Martin destroyed existing burgrave plots. Contrariwise it seems much more probable that the characteristic rows of plots, that can still be easily recognised within the subsequent town plan, represent the documented early town-development, and were merely fossilised by Martin. One candidate for such a fossilised row is the southern side of Priestgate (Fig. 6 (2), Plate 4), which presents an odd, 'double-banked', effect behind the southern row of properties facing onto Martin's market space, perhaps with a turn into the regular row of plots that form the western side of Lower Bridge Street. The northern row of Westgate, which serves neatly to define Abbot Martin's new market place and the exit from it into what became Howgate, may have been a second fossilized row, albeit consolidated in Martin's new layout. Between them, these two hypothetical early rows would have already begun to define the marketing space to the west of the monastic precinct, prior to Martin's initiative, and to mark the points at which the road networks – from north-east, north-west and west, as well as via the ferry from the south – delivered travellers into it. That Priestgate and Westgate were indeed key elements in the early development of the town is perhaps further indicated by their becoming two of the five wards by which the later medieval town was administered – along with Marketstede, Hythegate and Howgate/ Bungate (Serjeantson and Adkins 1906, 426; Mellows 1939, xx). In addition, recent development-led excavations on Westgate have yielded – besides plentiful later medieval activity, as expected – some evidence of pre-12th-century settlement in the form of Stamford and St Neots ware pottery. This was retrieved both from the fill of early pits, in deposits which also included disposed hearth cleanings, and as residual material in later features (Taylor *et al.* 1995, 170; Denham *et al.* 1996, 175; Spoerry and Hinman 1998). We should perhaps not expect comparably clear evidence from the open area of the market square in front of the monastic gatehouse, where it has been subject to modern excavation (Morris 2017). These limited insights can be viewed in the context of a mapping of 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'medieval' casual finds throughout the town and monastic precinct (Hall 2019, Fig. 3); Jackie Hall's conclusion that 'Abbot Martin tidied up a western town that had already begun' (*ibid.*, 148) encapsulates these same observations, though conceived in different terms, to the position put here.

Probably the key feature of Martin's new market, however, is the burgrave row forming the south side of the square (Fig. 6, Plate 4). It looks precisely like a planned urban development, sponsored by lordship and characteristic of so many demesne boroughs of

the 12th century (Beresford and Finberg 1973). Its eastern end lines up with the south side of the gatehouse block and at its western end it diverted the final few hundred metres of the road from Longthorpe and the west northwards, to enter the newly defined market, from an alignment that had previously run directly into Priestgate (which nevertheless survived as a minor, less convenient access to the town). Other built-up elements defining the confined latter-day market area are either typical 'rents' lining the western boundary of the monastic precinct or properties that represent, characteristically, the tight-packed consolidation of stalls on the market itself.

Two further features deserve comment. First, Abbot Martin's initiative, with the proposed new gatehouse on the same site as that still standing, evidently moved the precinct's western boundary west of the north-south stream (which was one of the details that made his action so memorable) and consolidated a new frontage there. But there are also hints, both documentary and archaeological, that at the same time a branch from that north-south stream was diverted westward to run – partly in a culvert – southwards along the new precinct frontage. It ran under the nave of the chapel of St Thomas and was bridged by the gatehouse carriageway (Morris 2017, 20; Peterborough HER, Document ID 3089). The diverted stream's original course seems to have remained open and functioning, even if part culverted and diminished, since it is shown on Thomas Eayre's map of 1721 (Fig. 6, Plate 4). This diverted watercourse may be interpreted functionally as providing an asset, by way of water supply, for Martin's new market; but emblematically it re-asserted the stream as the boundary – which Edmund King first noted – between secular/town and sacred/monastic spaces at Peterborough. The installation of such significant relics as those of the newly sainted Thomas Becket in the gatehouse chapel, at the new entrance to the 'sacred' space, and their curation by the foundation of a new institution – the Sisterhouse – may relate to the novelty and need for 'sanctification' of this extension to the monastic zone. Practically too, the new western monastic boundary, as it continued south from the gatehouse, was integrated with the development of the hythe structure, as described below, and its associated properties.

Secondly, the way out of Martin's new market area at the north-east corner, and access to Howgate and Bondgate, was via a new bridge over the old line of the north-south stream dividing the secular from the monastic, called Martin's Bridge (Fig. 6 (5), Plate 4). It is not mentioned in the documentation of Abbot Martin's programme of works, but the bridge's identification with him is clear and, as a feature in the town's topography, it would have kept the memory of his manipulation of the local topography alive amongst the populace. Alongside the bridge stood Barnard's Cross, marking the significant point of transition from the 'secular' into the 'sacred' sub-division of the town, in much the same way that we suppose the Radulfus Cross marked the vital crossing of the

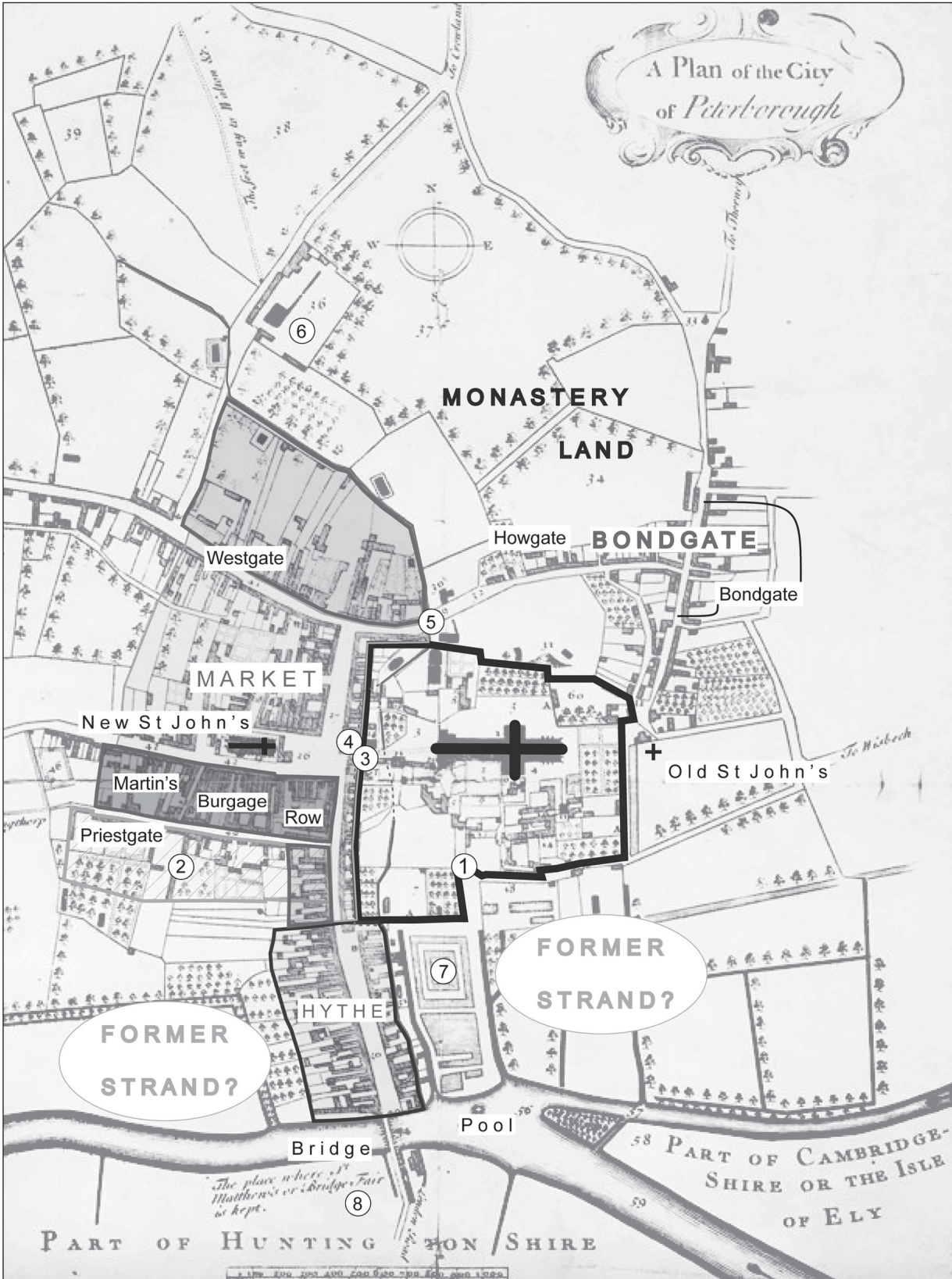


Figure 6. The town of Peterborough created by Abbot Martin: a reconstruction study, based on Thomas Eayre's town plan, 1721. Drawing P Everson. See also Plate 4.
 Numbered features: (1) Bulhithe Gate; (2) Priestgate row of early (?) properties; (3) Great West Gate; (4) Chapel of St Thomas Becket; (5) Martin's Bridge and Barnard's Cross; (6) Peterborough's Boroughbury Manor; (7) Abbot Godfrey's garden; (8) Location of early market (later Bridge Fair) on either side of the Nene.

Nene, on the Fletton side of the river (Everson *et al.* forthcoming).

These proposals, regarding the town's early topography, go against the prevailing tradition of commentary on Peterborough's urban development, however, which asserts that Abbot Martin moved a market from Bondgate, on the fen edge, at the north-east corner of the precinct, to the new site on the west side of the precinct. As a consequence, it is traditionally proposed, an ancient parish church of St John, situated on the fen edge to the east of the monastic church, having become isolated from its population, became increasingly inconvenient and eventually had to be replaced, at the beginning of the 15th century, by a new St John's church on the market square and in the midst of its community. This simplistic idea seems to have originated with Gunton (1686, 23) and to have been elaborated by Bishop White Kennett (1718–1728), as the revised edition of Dugdale's *Monasticon* reports (Caley *et al.* 1817–1830, I, 351 fn l). It has been revived and promulgated with an archaeological dimension from time to time since (Steane 1974, 146–151; Morris 2017, 8–9; and see Mackreth 1999). Kennett further proposed that Abbot Martin's re-arrangements included the creation of a bridge on the Nene at the location of the later medieval bridge, and thereby he also moved the river crossing westwards from an older location further downstream. This proposition was also embraced by Mellows (1939, ci), apparently, but locating the earlier ford 'to the east of the site of the present city bridge'. The idea that there was an early ford, further east, is helpfully deconstructed and dismissed by Jackie Hall (2019, 141–142). Yet this deeply entrenched narrative for Peterborough's earlier history – the main points of which have been clearly and usefully rehearsed recently by Hall herself (*ibid.*, 146–147) – is not the only way, or even the most obvious way, of reading the available evidence. We now wish to suggest that we need to develop a new narrative for Bondgate that better fits the archaeological and documentary evidence. Our reconsideration is in two parts: evidence for the character of early Bondgate; and surviving evidence for the early church of St John, which we will now assess in turn.

Bondgate

We have proposed above that we can see typical burgage plots in the existing townscape west of the abbey; but it seems unlikely (or at least undemonstrated) that, before Abbot Martin's re-organisation of the town plan, there were similar urban elements in the topography of Bondgate, at the north-east corner of the abbey precinct. The earliest reliable mapping of the town, by Eayre in the early 18th century, shows no hint of rows of burgage plots in the plan-form of Bondgate. Furthermore, King's study found no trace of any well-to-do residents there, such as might have occupied burgage plots. By contrast, instead, there was a concentration of the servile population in this area. As a name the main street was *le Bond(e)gate*

from the 13th century, probably – as the editors of the place-name volume conjecture – from having as residents 'the "bonds" or peasants or churls, as opposed to the burgesses and others of higher social rank' (Gover *et al.* 1933, 225). As Sweeting observed in the mid 19th century, the character of the area remained lower-class and artisan into the modern era (Sweeting 1910, 33).

The suggestion by archaeologists that a fossilised triangular market area can be read in the early-modern mapping of the settlement also appears to be completely without foundation. The underlying plan here is a T-junction of streets – Howgate meeting the north-south alignment of Bondgate. The curving western street – latterly St Mary's Street – which stands in contrast to the rigid rectangularity of the other two streets, is the only thing that might even hint that the road configuration here owes its origin to an infilled triangular market. Yet, on the earliest mapping of Peterborough by Speed, there are no properties at all facing onto the west side of this curving route, as surely there would have been had it defined the western side of an open triangular market space here, and formed the core of an early town. Eayre's map of 1721 does show the beginnings of properties here, but principally along the west side of what had been Howhithe, alias Speed's Bungate Hoole, where open space had also become infilled over the intervening century (both maps are conveniently reproduced in Hall 2019). Even the 'infilling' looks unconvincing, since (as portrayed on both Speed's and Eayre's maps) all its buildings face east onto the north-south street or north onto the east-west street, and they have associated plots of increasing size going north. Rather than one side of an ancient triangular market place, the curving street looks like nothing so much as a gently graded curving route, giving access to Howgate and the main town and its market, created to avoid the awkward right-angled turn from Bondgate into Howgate: a sort of late-medieval by-pass or short-cut. This route into the town was known, particularly, for handling large volumes of bulky fenland produce, like rushes, and moving them by the heavy cartload from the fen-edge to the south-east. The creation of a 'by-pass', as a secondary element in the street pattern, gives, we suggest, a much more credible explanation for the configuration, both of streets and of properties, that emerges on the town's early mapping.

Because he could identify 13th-century tenancies in c. 1400 that link with individuals named in the survey of c. 1125, King did not go on to make the logical suggestion that the creation of Bondgate – which is first documented in the early 13th century – actually formed part of Abbot Martin's re-organisation of the town (King 1980–81, 187–188; Gover *et al.* 1933, 225). Yet, with the removal of the supposed topographical evidence for an early market here, there seems to be a strong case for just that conclusion. In Hugh's account, the move would be covered by the item 'he changed/re-organised the town much for the better'. Martin may deliberately have sought, by creating a discrete settlement here, to separate the servile popu-

lation who worked on the abbey's estates from the marketing function to which he was hoping to attract more, new free-holders by offering something at least akin to burgage tenure. In practice, when they were documented in the early 13th century, the townspeople's liberties at Peterborough prove to have been quite circumscribed – as was common to monastic towns – but they were worthwhile liberties nevertheless: they were released from payment of annual tallage and of merchet, but reserved to the abbey were *'placitis et portmannemot et sequela furnorum nostrorum et omnibus consuetudinibus solitis et debitis ad ripam et mercatum de Burgo pertinentibus'* (Professor Edmund King pers. comm.). Alternatively, the creation of Bondgate could have been merely the inevitable consequence of Martin's formal re-planning the market space west of the abbey. But other details tend to lend support to our revisionist view of Peterborough's early development. It is notable, for example, that archaeological interventions in the Bondgate area have completely failed to identify appropriate material culture deriving from a supposed early medieval settlement; and this is the case when the type of settlement proposed might be expected to be prolific in finds, and lies in a part of the country where the post-Roman ceramic sequence is essentially continuous and well-studied. According to the Peterborough HER, the cause is not a lack of modern disturbance and archaeological interventions. Additionally, we have seen (above) that the route from the western market place towards Bondgate is known to have been improved, if not actually created, by the construction of 'Martin's Bridge' on Howgate (alongside which Barnard's Cross stood; above). These structures have long been attributed to Martin's re-planning of the town (Mellows 1939, ci, cii). Furthermore, clear evidence survives that, later in the 12th century, abbey servants (*nativi*, that is villeins of the town manor) in Bondgate had become landowners through the distribution of portions of reclaimed land by the abbot, which they were permitted to add to their tofts in the settlement (Higham 1999, 159). Finally, in support of our novel contention, we would point out that the entire Bondgate development lay east of the north-south watercourse or drain, discussed above, which seems – as Edmund King first noted – to have formed an early and underlying boundary between 'town' and 'monastery': with the secular world to its west, and that belonging to the monastery to its east, including the manor of Boroughbury (Fig. 6 (6), Plate 4) and, as we would argue, the dwellings of its servile labourers in Bondgate.

'Old' St John's church

The second element in our reconsideration of the urban development of early Peterborough involves the – admittedly limited – information that has come down to us regarding the 'old' church of St John, and its relationship with the 'new' church built in the Market Place at the start of the 15th century (Hall 2019, 153–156).

The site of 'old' St John's

The old church of St John was situated east of Peterborough's monastic church(es), and was described in 1404 as *'situata ... ad finem ville iuxta paludem eiusdem ville'*: located 'next to the fen or marsh' (Mellows 1939, 218). It was, by then, in an improbably out-of-the-way and marginal location, especially if one accepts the evidence set out above that Bondgate was a new, twelfth-century, element in the townscape. It is often said that the church's location is not known (e.g. RCHM 1969, 4; Hall 2019, 147; for an important – though rather negative – discussion, see PCCHER, Document ID 3082). But that is true only in the strict sense that its footprint or foundations have not been encountered and recorded directly; and that neither church nor churchyard appears on any map. In practice, the location is quite well defined in relation to nearby features (Fig. 7). St John's Close, which was known to early antiquaries as the location of St John's, extended at the end of the 19th century to over four acres and lay then on the east side of Vineyard Road and north of Gravel Walk (e.g. Sweeting 1910, 20; Bridges 1791, ii, 543). Indeed, the former St John's churchyard was notably large; big enough in the mid 15th century to generate revenue for the abbey's Almoner from hay, willows and rabbits (Mellows *et al.* 1954, 7, 55, 68). Burials, presumably from that graveyard, were encountered in groundworks in 1910 (Ordnance Survey record cards (cited RCHM 1969, 4) and OS 25-inch sheet NORTHAMPTONSHIRE VIII.12, 3rd edition). In the early 18th century, Thomas Marshall (incumbent of St John's on the Market Square, 1726–1748) also recorded human bones and pieces of stone coffins found in St John's Close, 'which was the old churchyard'. He notes, also, that the church lay 'at the east end of the abbey church' with its former vicarage immediately to the north-west of the churchyard (Anon 1900, 217–221). His identification of the latter building can be equated with the southernmost house in St John's Street, on its eastern side. It survived into the twentieth century, latterly as a pub called the Marquis of Granby (*ibid.*, 221 – identification by the journal's editor, W D Sweeting; <<http://peterboroughpubs.com/marquis-of-granby-st-johns-st/4593768039>> with image).

No doubt reviewing this same range of information, Don Mackreth located old St John's immediately outside the conjectured line of the eastern 'burh wall', but axially in line with the abbey's successive main conventual churches (Fig. 8) (for useful summaries, from different perspectives, of current understanding of this walled enclosure, see Gem 2019 and Hall 2019). Such a topographical arrangement must raise the possibility that the origins of St John's lay in an early chapel that formed part of a multi-church alignment of the early, pre-Viking monastery at Peterborough (compare Gittos 2013, 55–102); and that, by implication, that arrangement pre-dated the burh boundary and was severed by it, perhaps even making the early chapel of St John redundant. It is no counter-argument to say that the site of St John's lay outside

the defined later-medieval abbey precinct (insofar as it has been established on its east side); because we should not assume that the early monastery was bounded in this way – rather than purely topographically – and we should not (more generally) impose on early medieval monasteries, whose form is so poorly understood, later medieval norms and models (Blair 1992; Stocker 1993). The dedication to the Baptist would be wholly apposite in this location, matching the eastern location of baptismal chapels in a number of great-church complexes: it may have been the case at Canterbury Cathedral in the 8th century, for example (Morris 1989, 88). The location might also, as Peter Fergusson has elegantly illustrated at Canterbury, evoke the imagery of the living waters – an appropriate symbol of baptism – emerging eastward from the Temple, as described in Ezekiel 47, 1–12 (Fergusson 2015). The prophet's account of following the waters east and finding their depth increasing rapidly, from ankle- to knee- to waist- to over-head-deep, fitted the local fen-edge topography here particularly strikingly. Although this might seem far-fetched, the monks of Peterborough demonstrated full awareness of this imagery when they deployed a new baptismal font – of Alwalton marble – towards the end of the 12th century; and after old St John's had unequivocally been transformed into a parish church (Fergusson 2019, 191–193).

The origins of St John's as a parish church

'Old' St John's was evidently the parish church of the large parish of Peterborough prior to the famous shift in site to the market place at the beginning of the 15th century. 'Old' St John's appears routinely as such in the Lincoln diocesan records; and it had baptismal and burial rights, since both a font and burial ground are referred to in the documentation surrounding its demolition. But, far from being 'the ancient parish church of Peterborough' (as is often said), we now wish to establish that its parochial status was demonstrably an innovation, carrying with it the status of a vicarage, with the abbey retaining the advowson.

We suggest that this parochial status was a creation of the mid or later 12th century, for which Abbots Martin and William de Waterville seem to have been responsible. Martin ensured that his assignment of the parochial chapel of Burgh, (that is, 'old' St John's) to the abbey's Sacrist was confirmed by Pope Eugenius in 1146, and William defined that relationship more specifically, when he confirmed:

'from the chapel of the vill (to wit the chapel of St John in Burgh) to the sacristy, the greater tithes, and two-thirds of all the oblations and small tithes, and the first division of the mortuaries, and determined that the chaplain, in recognition thereof, should place the key of the chapel on the altar of the

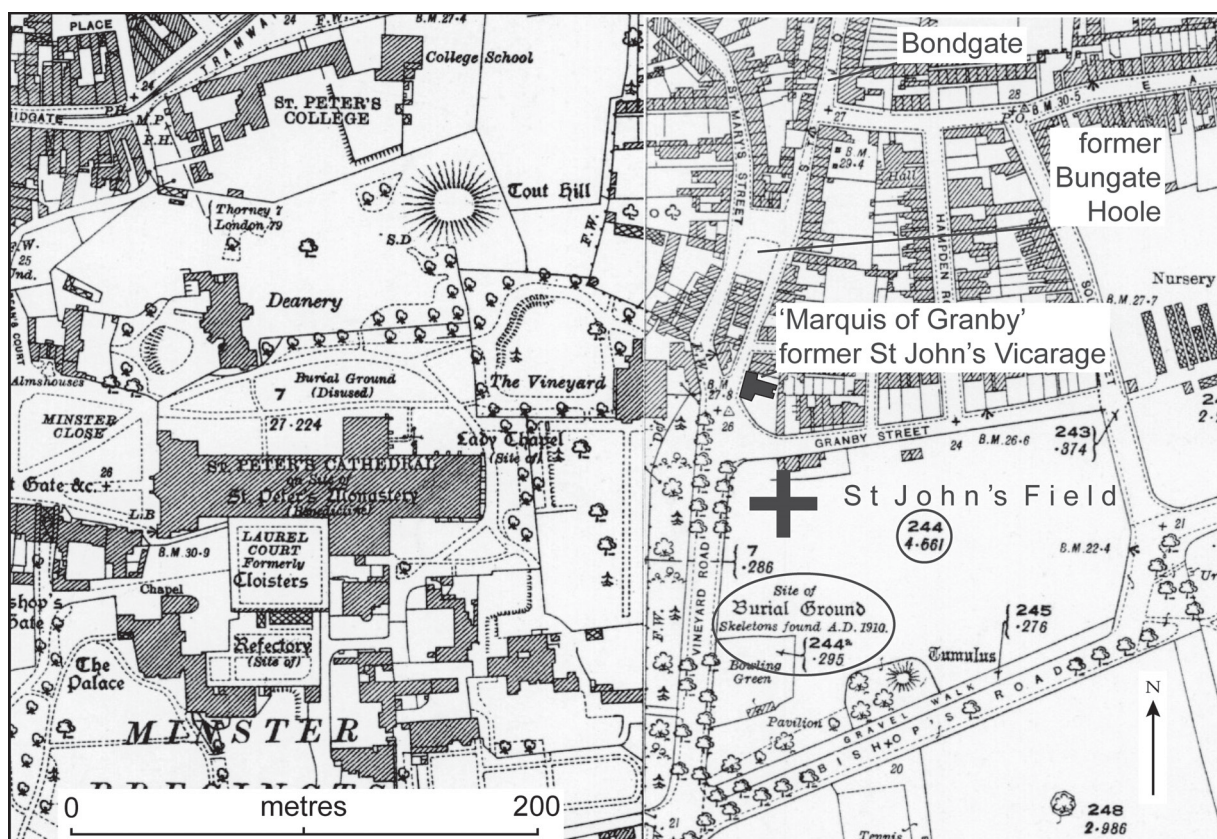


Figure 7. The location of Old St John's church, based on Ordnance Survey 3rd edition 25-inch map sheets NORTHAMPTONSHIRE VIII.11 and 12, revised 1924-5 published 1926. Drawing P Everson.

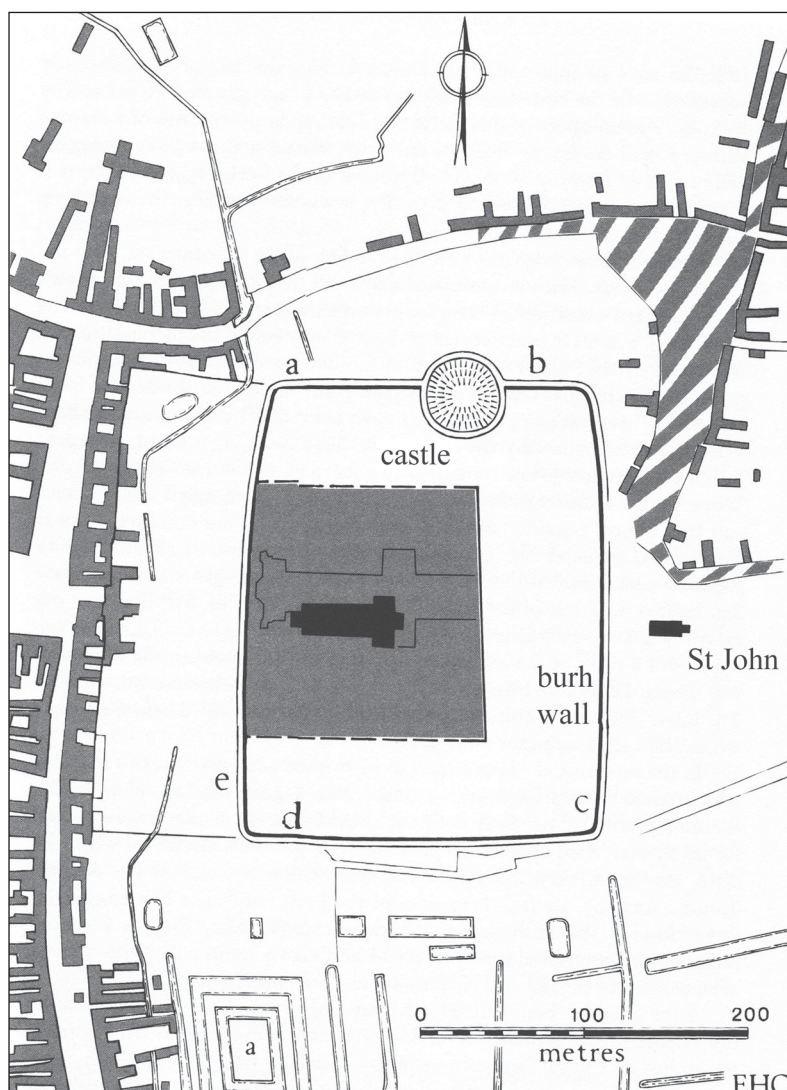


Figure 8. Reconstruction plan by D Mackreth of the late Anglo-Saxon burh and monastic precinct at Peterborough Abbey, superimposed on boundaries on Eayre's town plan of 1721; published as Mackreth 1999, Fig. 5.

monastery annually at Terce on Michaelmas day.' (Mellows 1949, 116–118, 130; see Mellows 1939, xxiv–xxv)

This special, and overtly subservient, relationship no doubt represented the abbey's conception of the new parochial institution. Indeed, the abbey, through the Sacrist, continued to make arrangements – including divisions of parochial income – which asserted its superior rights (e.g. Mellows 1939, 201–202, 203–206). In pursuit of ecclesiastical propriety, however, the diocesan authorities cast the relationship differently. They wanted to establish a distinct parochial church for the secular population of Peterborough with a monastic patron holding the advowson, and presenting the vicar for installation. These were the 'reformed' parochial structures that 13th-century bishops, like Hugh of Wells as bishop of Lincoln (1209–1235), laboured so hard and successfully to institute in his diocese, as his fellow bishops did in theirs. Accordingly, St John's was duly first recorded in the bishop's registers in this, unexceptional, form in 1219, following the death of its late vicar (Gibbons 1888, 31; Phillimore 1912,

209–210). But it seems clear to us that this 'reformed' model of parochial provision at Peterborough went back two generations, to Martin's assignment of the church to the Sacrist. The details of the new relationship between the laity, the abbey (in the form of the Sacrist) and the vicar were then subsequently defined in greater detail by Abbot William. The vicarage had '*mansum competens*', 23 acres of plough land and (if the vicar wished) the dining rights of a monk at the abbot's table or otherwise the same delivered to his house. Similarly, the post-Dissolution incumbent of 'new' St John's was normally an honorary canon of the cathedral.

Before this re-definition of St John's as an institution akin to a normal parish church, the abbey itself was no doubt the parochial centre of the typically huge early parish, as William Mellows supposed, and as a formal agreement between the diocesan and the abbey, following a dispute, defines (Mellows 1939, xxiii–xxiv; and see Foster 1931, 35–36). Elite lay burials in the abbey made between the later 10th and the 12th centuries, in the form of grave-markers and grave-covers, afford archaeological confirmation for

the assumption that the abbey was indeed also the early parochial church (Irvine 1883–4; Hall 2008). The quantity and 'middling' quality of these monuments has led Jackie Hall to propose that it might constitute the sort of 'exceptional collection' that reflects an early alien trading community (Hall 2019, 148 & n). In a place such as Peterborough, a single dominant ecclesiastical institution, be it the abbey church or another church within the abbey complex, might well host burials from such a community, as Hall proposes. Certainly, as we discuss below, there was an early beaching strand along the south side of the monastic precinct; and the promotion of riverine trade became a recurrent interest of the more energetic abbots.

Objections to this straightforward understanding of the origins of St John as a parochial church arise from several scraps of documentation, whose significance may each be debated. These are conveniently set out in Hall (2019), though she takes them as clear evidence of the 11th-century origin of St John's as a parish church, and – by implication – of a population at Bondgate for it to serve. One account suggests directly that Abbot Thorold (1070–1098) was 'founder' of St John's (Peterborough HER, Document ID 3082 and notes). The original document does not survive and the information comes to us at second, third or even fourth hand but, in the first instance via Thomas Marshall (incumbent of St John's on the Market Square, 1726–1748) who reports finding Thorold's name annually commemorated, down to the Dissolution but not subsequently, in 'some ancient papers in the Church chest' (Anon 1900). What weight we should put on this uncheckable source is itself problematic. What confidence we should have in the expertise of Marshall to read accurately and understand properly the documents' significance is unclear, at best. After all, Marshall's clearly erroneous assertion that Abbot Martin moved St John's to the market place at Peterborough in 1150 shocked the distinguished antiquarian Maurice Johnson at the Spalding Gentlemen's Society! Thorold's name might itself raise doubts about his qualifications as 'founder'. He was – in the recent estimate of Eric Fernie – 'a thug... who was positively ill-disposed towards the abbey' (Fernie 2019, 161). He was otherwise, in Peterborough tradition, most notably (though doubtfully) linked with a castle at Peterborough, itself doubtfully identified with the mound called Tout Hill. Abbot for so long and at an important time under an alien regime, he is an individual to whom Peterborough's myths and oddities seem to accrue. But the most important objection to Thorold as a 'founder' of St John's is that to seek an individual 'founder' of the church is to misunderstand the process of parochial formation at play in this case. We would argue that, in the elevation of St John's to parochial status in the mid twelfth century, the monastery was – instead – creating an up-to-date version of a parochial church institution out of one of its long-standing assets; thereby fulfilling its 'traditional' 'proto-parochial' role amongst the surrounding population, by endowing a vicarage in an outlying chapel, and itself retaining the advowson.

A second potential objection to our proposals regarding St John's is the agreement in the time of Abbot Ernulf (1104–14) between the Sacrist and a 'presbyter', Ansketil, who had charge of chapels at Burh and Thorpe (Peterborough and Longthorpe) belonging to the abbey, about the burial of the poor – '*sepultura pauperum*' and other benefits (Mellows 1939, 199). This, it is argued, signals at least a proto-parochial status for St John's – identifying the chapel with the later parish church, despite no dedication for Ansketil's chapel being specified. Specific provision for the burial of the poor by monastic institutions is not uncommon, and might be attached to a specific altar within the monastery; well-studied parallels occur at Kirkham Priory, North Yorkshire, or Holy Trinity Priory in York (Burton, 1999, especially 339ff; Stocker 1979, 36–40). Cook (1961, 140–141) lists 34 monastic churches that have survived in parochial use, most of which accommodated parochial altars in their naves during the medieval period. In this case, we might propose, alternatively, that the altar was located in one of the other discrete churches whose existence in the early monastic complex is suspected by Mackreth, perhaps – in order to be near the graveyard – one on the northern side of the later monastic church. The agreement with Ansketil certainly does not, anyway, imply anything about the location of laity within the abbey church, who we suggest were sharing facilities within the abbey precinct in a traditional manner. The term 'presbyter', similarly, does not convey any specific ecclesiastical office or institution; indeed, the priest's subservience to the abbey's sacrist is said to be of long standing: '*sicut enim antiquitus fuit*'. Consequently, this documentation does not, in itself, imply the establishment by 1104 of a formally created, legal vicarage.

A third potential objection to our suggestion might be generated from the evidence for St John's relationship with the bishop of Lincoln in a document of 1133x1135, which might appear to relate to an existing parish church. It is reported that:

'The abbot, in the presence of the king and his court <at Rouen>, has admitted the customs which the bishop claimed in that parish church; in such wise that the bishop may hold therein his pleas, synods and chapters, as in the other parish churches of the bishopric' (Foster 1931, 35–36).

But we would argue that, in fact, this incident does not refer to 'old' St John's at all; rather – as Mellows rightly understood (Mellows 1939, xxiii–xxiv) – it documents the abbey itself, before the establishment of a parish at St John's, still playing its historic role as the proto-parish church of Peterborough. Indeed, it is possible that it was the lack of clarity about the abbey's ancient parochial role that stimulated the legal judgement in the first place. That this agreement between the abbot and the bishop is embedded in a royal writ of Henry I underlines its significance as dealing with a major institution, not a minor parish church, on a key point of dispute of the age. It would not have taken a decision brokered by the king and enforced by a royal writ to give the diocesan bishop access to a common-or-

garden parish church. In fact, we wish to argue that, contrariwise, this impeccable documentation demonstrates – precisely – that St John’s had not yet, in the 1130s, been formally ‘reformed’ to become the parish church of Peterborough. The date of the judgement implies that the abbot of Peterborough on whom this unwelcome, humiliating, agreement was enforced would have been Martin of Bec, newly in office. This negative outcome for Peterborough was probably inevitable, politically, as the diocesan was Alexander the Magnificent, who would have been backed by the influence at court of his formidable kinship network (Smith 2004). We can suggest, then, that the offence and intrusion felt by the abbey, and perhaps by Abbot Martin personally, as a result of this judgement was a factor in the initiative by Abbots Martin and William to create a ‘reformed’ vicarage at St John’s in subsequent decades, and for it to become, formally, a recognisable, discrete, parish church for Peterborough.

It is worth noting that these points are not – as they appear presented in this way – individual cruxes for debate. Rather, in our understanding of them, they form a coherent narrative of a typical old ecclesiastical regime, with the parochial function embedded in the abbey church being subjected to challenge in the era of monastic reform, in the early to mid 12th century. Now, a more ‘modern’, and more clearly defined, division of responsibility between the monks performing the *opus dei* and the parochial responsibilities of the holder of the advowson was expected by the episcopacy. It is a narrative precisely consonant with the bulls of Pope Eugenius and the text relating to the abbey’s rights in ‘the chapel in the vill (to wit the chapel of St John in Burgh)’, quoted above.

To summarise our proposed new understanding of the site and origins of St John’s church, then: we believe it may have originated as the easternmost of a linear family of churches of the sort known to be characteristic of early monasteries. But it was, apparently, cut off from the alignment of early churches further west by the construction of the burh wall during the late-Anglo-Saxon period, although evidently retained by the monastery as some sort of dependent chapel (Fig. 8). It became, we suggest, an asset of the post-Conquest monastery looking for a purpose; and, following the 1135 royal and episcopal decision that the ancient governance arrangements for the abbey’s huge proto-parish were no longer acceptable, a new role for St John’s was finally established by Abbots Martin and William. The old chapel of St John was to house the new parochial church servicing both the new community at Bondgate and the parish of Peterborough beyond the abbey precinct. If this is a correct analysis, these developments can also be seen as Peterborough’s response to international movements for both monastic reform and for parochial provision. A key consideration in this reorganisation of responsibilities would, no doubt, have been the recognition that the former physical proximity between the laity and the monastic community, within the precinct, was no longer thought seemly. And the new ‘reformed’ arrangements would ensure that that sec-

ular population (and indeed the diocesan) could no longer claim parochial rights either within the abbey church itself or within the precinct. From the abbey’s point of view, this was perhaps the principal way in which Abbot Martin, in the soft but telling phraseology employed by Hugh Candidus, ‘improved many things’.

The chapel of St Thomas Becket

By 1404, ‘old’ St John’s had lately been in ruins and had been pulled down two years earlier; the relevant text refers to a specific day – 19 June 1402 – in a way that may mean that the church was deconsecrated on that day and that the work of dismantling had begun (Mellows 1939, 218). In fact, the demolition of the previous church was the primary argument used by the abbey for its replacement by the new church of St John in the market square. The old church’s awkwardness of access for the townsfolk was a secondary consideration. But the loss of the previous building may not have been the townsfolk’s primary consideration because it had long been their practice to use the chapel of St Thomas Becket, next to the main gate of the abbey on its north side (Fig. 6 (4), Plate 4), instead of ‘old’ St John’s – excusing themselves because of the distance and bad weather. As early as the 1190s, the abbey had set out how offerings made on feast days at St John’s and St Thomas’s should be divided – clearly in order to redress the detrimental effect of attendance at services in St Thomas’s on St John’s income (Mellows 1939, 201–202). Though the chancel of St Thomas lay east of the new stream, within the precinct and served principally to service the hospital or almshouses known as the Sisterhouse, its nave projected west over the culverted stream onto the market place (Fig. 9) (Mellows 1918, 293–294, especially 296–300; and recently Fergusson 2019, 194–195; Mahood 2019, 203–204, 205–209). The chancel survives with stylish fourteenth-century fenestration, but no doubt on an earlier footprint. But the nave was demolished completely in the first decade of the fifteenth century and its fabric was recycled, along with material from old St John’s, in the construction of the new St John’s on the market square (Fig. 10). Indeed, traces of these reused older materials can still be identified within the fabric of new St John’s in the market square. This process was clearly not just pragmatic and economical but, as the contemporary documentation details, a deliberate and ritualistic acknowledgement of the new parochial church’s twin antecessors: one remote from the market on the far side of the abbey, the other on the market square itself. This carefully documented process suggests that the earlier entity on the market site was, in effect, the market chapel, and perhaps in practice had been founded as such. Peterborough otherwise seems to have had no medieval market chapel, whether evidenced in physical remains or in explicit documentation. Because of the ubiquitous ecclesiastical role in overseeing and validating commercial transactions by its presence, the apparent

absence of a chapel in the market at Peterborough, contemporary with the market's creation, is a puzzle. In fact, had there been no chapel here, it would have made Peterborough market place quite exceptional amongst medieval market foundations in England.

Perhaps, then, Martin of Bec had intended the market to be served by the new monastic chapel, that was subsequently dedicated to St Thomas, adjacent to his new gatehouse? St Thomas's foundation is ascribed to Abbot William de Waterville (1155–1175), who followed Martin of Bec in office, but again its construction is attributed to Abbot Benedict (Mahood 2019, 203 with references). Benedict's critical action in respect of the chapel may have been, not its construction, but his provision of relics of the martyred Becket, and thereby causing a change of dedication in a pre-existing chapel (Fergusson 2019, 194–195). From its fabric (especially through its surviving east end), from its dedication, and from its integration with the development westward of the new frontage of the abbey and its great gate, the chapel would sit very comfortably as part of Abbot Martin's larger topographical development plans, even if it was not completed at the time of his death. If its foundation was indeed part of Abbot Martin's plan, that fact might also explain why the townsfolk living and working alongside the market were accustomed to use St Thomas's chapel in numbers, as they were reported as doing, rather than take the long walk around the precinct boundary to St John's. They might have felt that they used it by right, as burgage holders in the market, rather than, as is usually said, by special leave and tolerance of the abbey.

The same twin issues of the parochial rights of the laity and the threat of intrusion by the diocesan that had pertained in the 12th century emerged once again at the beginning of the 15th century, when 'old'

St John's became ruinous, and when the townsfolk protested the effort and inconvenience of accessing 'old' St John's. More practically, their propensity to throng the chapel of St Thomas at the east end of their market place, and their wish to fulfil their tithe obligations and make their oblations there, rather than at St John's, had been the cause of long-standing problems, despite attempts by the abbey to regulate them (Mellows 1939, xxv–xxvi, 204; Morris 2017, 20–21; see also Halliday forthcoming). No doubt it was for this reason that the then Sacrist, George Fraunceys, negotiated the move of St John's church from the old to the new site, and documented it so carefully. The result (and surely the intention), was to keep parochial activity at arm's length. Peterborough thus stands in contrast with those monasteries which had set aside space within their church for parish use, and which suffered the resulting noise and interruption. A similar solution – the relocation of the former parochial church outside the precinct – was achieved a generation later at Benedictine Bardney, for example, and elsewhere; and at Peterborough the provision that was made for lay burial within a cemetery on the north side of the abbey church, as part of the arrangement, was presumably both difficult to gain-say and a small price to pay (Mellows 1939, xxx–xxx, 199–230). The documentation includes a note of the first person whose funeral was celebrated in the new church and who was duly buried in the 'great cemetery' (Professor Edmund King pers. comm.).

Bulhithe and the Nene frontage

To the south of the reformed market space, Martin's reported restructuring of provision for shipping may have been no less significant for the town's layout:

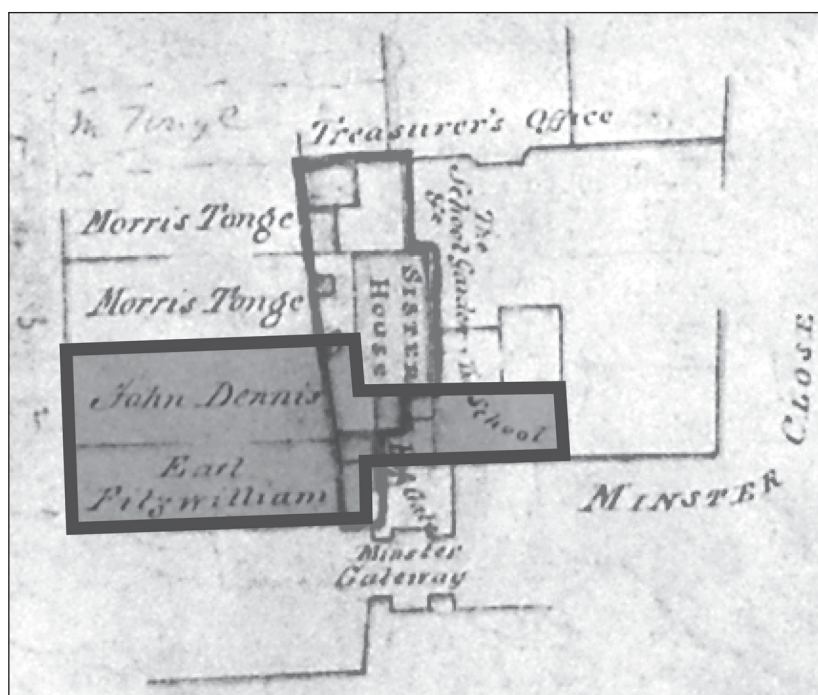


Figure 9. Extract from estate map of 1820-30, showing the layout of successor properties north of the gatehouse, with footprint of St Thomas's chapel superimposed. Mahood 2019, Fig. 3, based on a detail of NRO, Map1267, f.3. Reproduced courtesy of the Diocese of Peterborough.



Figure 10. Top: The market place at Peterborough, engraving of c. 1850 by J S Clarke. The view looks eastwards from the north-east corner of St John's church towards the abbey gatehouse, with the site of St Thomas's chapel to its north, marked here by the first two properties to the north. Above: Gatehouse and St Thomas's chapel from the east. Photograph D Stocker.

'he changed ... the ships' landing place'. The story of Hereward the Wake's assault on the abbey precinct in 1070, arriving in many ships, and attacking the abbey's southern frontage and the Bulhithe gate there (Fig. 6 (1), Plate 4), suggests that there was a tidal beaching place of traditional early medieval type on the north bank of the Nene at Peterborough at that time. The incidence of the local name 'le Beche' as mapped by Mellows probably coincides with this zone (OE **bæce*, 'land along a river, strand': see OED; Smith 1956, I, 15, 23–4; Cavill 2018, 15). Abbot Martin's alteration here, signalled by the use of the word 'hythe', evidently began the replacement of this strand with constructed vertical wharfage, in a manner that became the norm through the medieval period. Such work will have created a massive pier, equating to Lower Bridge Street – medieval *Hithgate* – pushed out into the river, probably broadening and consolidating what had earlier been an ancient causeway. By c. 1300 these developments made it feasible to attempt bridging the Nene at this point; though the first attempt in 1308 was a failure, and demonstrated that the currents here, created by constricting a tidal river like the Nene, with its whirlpools and eddies at the division of the waters just down-river, were still a potent natural force. Such a change, from ferry to bridge, would have been memorable in itself, but it would also have benefitted the abbey by focusing secular marketing activities on the market square, perhaps making the Bulhithe Gate entering the precinct from the south effectively redundant as a public access, thus freeing the southern part of the later medieval precinct for development (Hall 2019 identifies and discusses this matter of lay access). By the later middle ages, the cloisters had been reconstructed and a discrete and spacious abbot's house had been provided in this south-western part of the precinct. Indeed, the former riverfront beaching area became abbey land outside the southern precinct wall in time, and included in its western half the remarkable water garden or *herbarium*, which Abbot Godfrey of Crowland created as an adjunct to his house and garden within the precinct in 1301 (Fig. 6 (7), Plate 4) (Peterborough HER, Document ID 3036; see Thomas Eayre's map of c. 1719–21; Brown and Taylor 1991, especially 64).

Conclusion

Our investigation of Bondgate and its church of St John underpins our fundamental proposition that, rather than this place being considered an early market and early church situated to the north-east of the abbey precinct, Bondgate was, in fact, a new settlement created by Abbot Martin and 'old' St John's represented, in reality 'reformed' parochial provision for that settlement – albeit located at the site of a former component church of the early monastery of *Medeshamstede*. This new reading accords precisely with King's understanding that Abbot Martin's role in respect of Peterborough's market was not as its originator, but as its regulator and reviver; and we have of-

ferred further topographical evidence to explain why that idea is powerful. We also suggest, now, that this re-organisation of the townscape involved removing the abbey's servile population to the specialised settlement of Bondgate to the north of the extant, but hitherto under-utilised, St John's church.

Our careful reading of the various strands of evidence demonstrates, then, that Hugh Candidus's precise description of Abbot Martin's alteration to the location and relative importance of gateways into the abbey precinct, and his re-shaping of the town's existing markets, cannot be prayed in support of the proposition that an 'old' town at Bondgate was relocated westwards of the Abbey, to become today's Market Place. We suggest, instead, that, in both cases, Abbot Martin's achievements were made by the simple expedient of extending the abbey's precinct west from the earlier burh, in the way that Mackreth has defined following excavations (Fig. 8) (Mackreth 1999). Martin combined this expansion of the precinct with the start of the transformation of the early medieval strand on the north side of the river into later-medieval shipping hythes, which itself eventually created the necessary scale and length of causeway to permit construction of a bridge to be contemplated. Other insights have also emerged during the course of this enquiry, such as the suggestion that the chapel situated on the market square adjacent to the precinct's great west gate, known by its later dedication to St Thomas Becket was, by intention and practice, the market chapel of Martin's new trading focus. Like the diverted stream along the western side of the new precinct boundary providing water, the chapel provided an essential market facility for those trading there.

Viewed in this new light, then, Abbot Martin's activities within the town – his re-definition of the ancient gathering place and its regularisation as a 'modern' market place, with a water-supply and a chapel; his re-definition of the abbey's parochial responsibilities and the building in which they took place; and his re-definition of the abbey's waterside – all appear coherent and inter-related, with benefits for the monastery as well as for the town. Indeed, they became fundamental to the subsequent history of Peterborough – which indeed is how Hugh Candidus presents them. We can guess, furthermore, that Martin's actions also had broader political objectives: to consolidate his abbey's independence from diocesan intrusion, certainly, but also to reassert its ancient status amongst the Fenland abbeys as the institution that oversaw the distinctive topography and traditions embedded in its locality at the mouth of the Nene. That broader understanding of the significance of place will lead us – in future publications – back to the newly-discovered cross at Fletton (Everson *et al.* forthcoming).

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