ASPECTS OF THE TOPOGRAPHY OF EARLY MEDIEVAL CHESTER [1]

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In recent years, our understanding of Chester's post Roman development as a proper urban centre has been greatly advanced by the work, most of it appearing in this *Journal*, of archaeologists, numismatists, and place name specialists. However, one important source of evidence for early settlement patterns, that of boundary lines, has so far been neglected by historians of Chester, although elsewhere its value has begun to be recognised. The present contribution aims at making good this omission. By examining the inter-relationship of the interlocking territories assigned to Chester's parishes, and the alignment of its Saxon and medieval walls, in conjunction with the findings of more traditional disciplines, it constructs a relative chronology of the site's early urban development in terms of its physical expansion, the emergence of thoroughfares, and the demarkation and occupation of culturally distinct areas.

Medieval Chester had at the fullest count nine parishes. Where a tenth is reckoned, as by the chronicler Stowe in 1371, or apparently by the antiquary William Smith in about 1575,[2] it is a supernumerary produced by confusion over the status of chapels associated with the Abbey of St. Werburgh. The chapel of St. Thomas the Martyr without Northgate, was the site of the Abbey's Leet Court for its tenants, and did not achieve parish status until 1871.[3] St. Oswald's was a late Saxon chapel within the Abbey, from which it was not distinguished by name until the later 13th century, or by territory until 1509, at which date St. Oswald's became a parish, and the Abbey precinct an extra parochial area.[4] Accordingly, in what follows, 'St. Werburgh's' will be used to designate the combined territory of the Abbey and the chapel. For convenience of reference,

[2] Stowe, *Chronicle*, p. 425; Bodleian Library, Manuscripts, Rawlinson B 282, quoted by D. M. Palliser, ed., *Chester: Contemporary Descriptions by Residents and Visitors*, 2nd edition, 1980, p. 10. Smith says there are nine parishes, but lists ten.
[3] *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 45, 1950, pp. 6 f.; R. H. Morris, *Chester*, p. 167.
[4] J. Tait, ed., *The Chartulary of the Abbey of St. Werburgh, Chester*, vol. 1, Chetham Society, new series, vol. 79, 1920, pp. 113-17; cf. p. 119; Morris, *Chester*, pp. 134 f., n. 1; Ordnance Survey Boundary Library, 4906, pp. 4-16.

some basic information on Chester's churches and chapels is set out in tabular form, in Table 1.[5]

TABLE 1

THE PARISH CHURCHES AND MAIN CHAPELS
OF EARLY MEDIEVAL CHESTER

SAXON GROUP

St. John's	689 (traditional)	DB	L
[St. Peter and St. Paul's]	earlier, rededicated as		
St. Werburgh's	907	DB	L
St. Oswald's chapel	907		
St. Peter's	907	DB	L

SCANDINAVIAN GROUP

St. Olave's	1119 (King Olaf died 1030)		L
St. Bridget's	1224		

UNPLACED

St. Michael's	1178-82		L

POST CONQUEST GROUP

St. Mary's on the Hill	1150		L
Holy Trinity	1188		L
St. Martin's	c. 1195		L

CHAPELS

St. Chad's	temp. Henry III (1217 onwards); Ceadda died at end of 7th century.	
St. Mary's by St. John's	1086	DB
St. Nicholas'	1217-27	
St. Thomas'	1189	

Note: dates of first mention are given. DB means mentioned in Domesday Book, L in Lucian, c. 1195.

Some of the parishes were very large, a characteristic of the shire as a whole: St. Werburgh's/St. Oswald's included townships in three hundreds, and St. Mary's

[5] The following sources were used for Table 1. *For Saxon parishes*: Tait, *Chartulary*, vol. 1, pp. xv ff.; F. R. Raines, ed., *Notitia Cestrensis*, vol. 1, Chetham Society, 1st series, vol. 8, 1845, pp. 92 f.; D. Jones, *The Church in Chester, 1300-1540*, Chetham Society, 3rd series, vol. 7, 1957, pp. 6 f., 25 f., 44 ff. *For other parishes*: J. McN. Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names at Chester', *J.C.A.S.*, vol. 55, 1968, pp. 33, 37, 48, 52 f. *For chapels*: St. Mary's — J. Tait, ed., *The Domesday Survey of Cheshire*, Chetham Society, new series, vol. 75, 1916, pp. 92 f.; cf. p. 30; St. Chad's — Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', p. 37; cf. Jones, *Church in Chester*, p. 8; J. D. Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire, 383-1066*, 1972, p. 8; St. Nicholas — *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 55, 1960, p. 102; cf. Jones, *Church in Chester*, p. 8; St. Thomas' — G. Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, vol. 1, p. 352.

on the Hill was not much smaller.[6] However, our chief concern here will be with their urban portions, and all the parishes contrived to have their 'head' within the city walls, however large the 'body' outside.

The first task is to define their bounds, which has to be done by working backwards from the Ordnance Survey 1:500 scale exhibition maps of 1872 (i.e. before the Divided Parishes Act, 1876), together with the O.S. Boundary Remark Books made at the time of the original boundary mereing;[7] through other 19th century maps such as the Tithe Award Maps of 1837-45 (although these have a reputation for discrepancies), and John Wood's map of 1833;[8] to church terriers of the 17th century, and occasional earlier perambulations which survive by chance;[9] not forgetting local lore and surviving meres incised on buildings;[10] at each stage eliminating any slight shifts which may have occurred as the result of contemporary building. The most drastic alteration in any of the Chester boundaries occurred in 1832-33, when St. Bridget's Church was relocated to make a path for Grosvenor Street. In its new position, it occupied part of St. Mary's parish, and the latter was compensated by receiving a detached fragment of St. Bridget's. Other alterations will be noted in context, but in general ecclesiastical boundaries in Chester, as elsewhere,[11] appear to have displayed remarkable durability after about 1200, when the town had received its full complement of parishes. What the O.S. maps recorded, is substantially the parish layout of the early Middle Ages (see Fig. 5).

On the other hand, the process which took place in the Middle Ages, whereby these parishes evolved in succession over something like five hundred years, within a restricted area, was far from simple. Not only might medieval municipal building, such as a defensive wall, or the natural features of the site, such as the Roodee, cause a boundary to shift, but any new parish might involve the partition of an existing one. Moreover, the periods of most active parish formation turn out to be deficient in documentation, so that all too little is known about the territorial possessions of the patrons of churches, around which parish perimeters were drawn. Clearly, it is necessary to proceed with care, bearing in mind Susan

[6] Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, vol. 1, pp. 304, 333.
[7] Chester 1:500 O.S. Sheets XXXVIII/11/12, 13, 17, 18, 22, 23; XXXVIII/15/2, 3, 7, 8; O.S. Boundary Remark Books 4291, 4905, 4906, 4910, 4913, 4915, 5151, 5152, 5155, 5156.
[8] Cheshire Record Office, Tithe awards, apportionments and maps for the Chester parishes, Refs. EDT 93-97. A copy of Wood's map is held by the Chester City Record Office, Ref. D/JWW 588.
[9] *Terriers: Cheshire Sheaf*, 1st series, vol. 2, 1881, p. 199; 3rd series, vol. 59, 1964, pp. 5-7, 35. *Perambulations*: ibid., 3rd series, vol. 4, 1902, pp. 34-47.
[10] ibid., 3rd series, vol. 44, 1949, p. 50; vol. 45, 1950, pp. 6, 10, 14; vol. 48, 1953, pp. 45 f.; vol. 49, 1954, p. 79; F. Simpson, *A History of . . . St. Peter's Church, Chester*, 1909, pp. 161 f.
[11] e.g. C. N. L. Brooke and G. Keir, *London 800-1216: The Shaping of a City*, 1975, pp. 129 f.; cf. M. R. G. Conzen, 'Alnwick, Northumberland: a Study in Town Plan Analysis', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 27, 1960, p. 25, for land tenure boundaries.
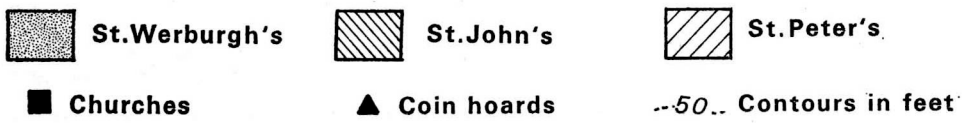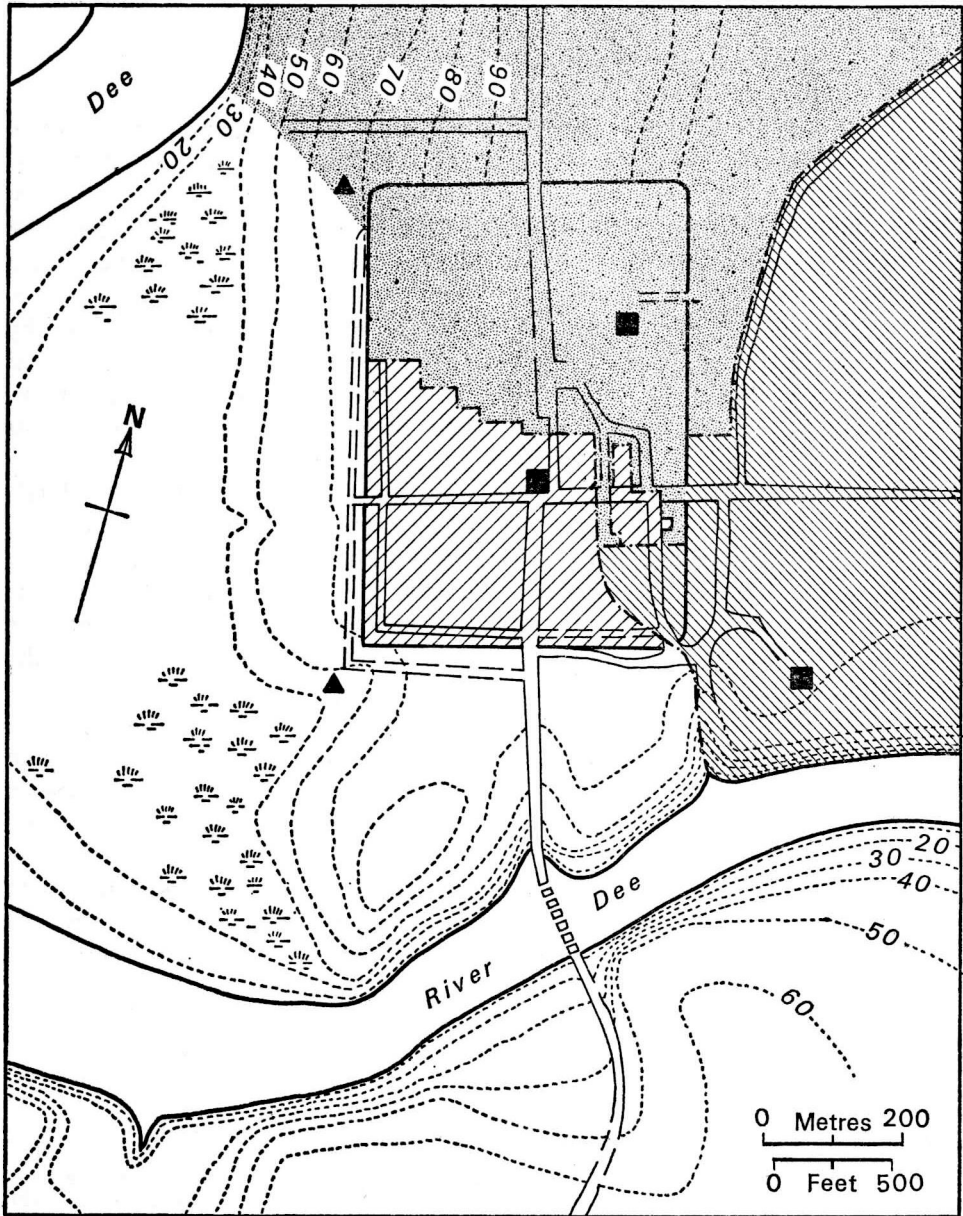
Fig. 1 — Contours and Saxon parishes, c. 907

St.Werburgh's St.John's St.Peter's

■ Churches ▲ Coin hoards --50-- Contours in feet

Reynolds' stricture on the topographical approach, that it tends to describe what *could* have happened rather than what actually *did* happen.[12]

In fact, many of the conclusions offered here necessarily rest on little more than inference. They therefore need to be tested by more realistic techniques, before being used as the basis of further work. Nevertheless, they have the merit of coherence, and of accommodating all relevant 'hard' facts.

The Site

Despite the growing body of archaeological evidence for almost continuous occupation of the Roman site throughout the Dark Ages, it was far from bearing a density of population recognisable as urban, before Aethelflaed's reoccupation in 907.[13] By this date, there were already two important Saxon churches in existence. The College of St. John the Baptist was traditionally founded in 689, a date which, according to Bu'Lock, there is no reason to dispute. Secondly, the church of St. Peter and St. Paul, which later became St. Werburgh's, though not reliably attested before 874, when the relics of the Mercian princess of that name were transferred there for safe keeping from beleaguered Hanbury, is most likely to have been a senior foundation.[14] At such a time, demographic factors would have been negligible influences on the location of the churches and their parish bounds, in comparison with the physical contours of the landscape, and the residual features of Roman layout. These need to be carefully examined if the parish bounds are to be understood (*see* Fig. 1).

Mr. D. Mason has provided us with a relief map of the site in Roman times.[15] The main change to have taken place in the Dark Ages, would have been the drying out of the inner channel, which he identified as encircling the Roodee to the East, and of the creek which had formed a dock area for the Romans. This process was no doubt a lengthy one if unaided. A wall was not constructed across the site of the mouth of the creek until the later 12th century, when, despite infilling, there was still a small natural water course.[16] In about 970, the Northern bank of the creek suggested itself as a good hiding place for a Saxon coin hoard.[17] In the figure, therefore, minimal changes have been proposed.

The Roman fortress walls, and the main axial streets they enclosed, are also shown in the figure, although the evidence for their persistence throughout the

[12] Susan Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns*, 1977, p. 189.
[13] e.g. J. C. McPeake, 'The End of the Affair', in T. J. Strickland and P. J. Davey, eds., *New Evidence for Roman Chester*, 1978, pp. 41-44; cf. P. H. Rahtz, 'The Archaeology of West Mercian Towns', in A. Dorimer, ed., *Mercian Studies*, 1977, pp. 109 f.
[14] Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire*, pp. 33 f.
[15] D. Mason, 'Chester: the Evolution and Adaptation of its Landscape', *J.C.A.S.*, vol. 59, 1976, fig. 11.
[16] W. F. Irvine, 'Notes on the History of St. Mary's Nunnery', *J.C.A.S.*, new series, vol. 13, 1907, p. 103.
[17] G. Webster, 'A Saxon Treasure-Hoard found at Chester, 1950', *Antiquaries Journal*. vol. 33, 1953, pp. 22-32.

Dark Ages is indirect and retrospective. There are no clear indications before 907. Chester in 874, for instance, was not necessarily better fortified than Hanbury, merely out of the path of the Danes. Nor, on the other hand, was the Eastern wall necessarily in ruins when the boundaries of St. John's and St. Werburgh's were drawn to cross it. However, in 907, Aethelflaed 're-built'[18] the fortress as one of a line of garrisoned posts defending North West Mercia against Scandinavian attacks from Ireland, and their colonies in Wirral.[19] This date is generally accepted as marking Chester's emergence as a *burh* proper, with a large permanently resident population including not only clerics and farmers, but soldiers and sailors with their families, and the commissariat and moneyers associated with royal campaigns against the Irish Norse, and, after Sihtric's death in 927, against the Welsh.[20] Local archaeologists also generally agree that Aethelflaed's repairs did not extend the line of the Roman defences.[21] This has never been a question in the case of the Northern and Eastern walls. To the West, two series of excavations have revealed traces of post Roman repairs to the Roman rampart. In the words of the latest excavator here, it is at least 'a working hypothesis . . . that the ruined Roman defences [of the whole site] were adapted in the tenth century and remained in commission until c 1200'.[22]

This contention is supported by the location of Saxon finds. Potsherds and other evidence of actual habitation have been found consistently within the Roman West wall line, but secretly buried coin hoards outside it.[23] To the South there are as yet no clear archaeological pointers, but any argument for the extension of the Roman South wall in the Sexon period must take account of the likely state of the creek then.[24]

The archaeological evidence, while not conclusive, is highly suggestive. There has been an attempt by Mr. D. Hill to clinch this argument by calculations derived from an independent source, the *Burghal Hidage*.[25] This document allows the length of walls to be worked out for other West Saxon *burhs* with a fair degree of accuracy, and although Chester does not appear in that text, there exist roundabout ways of implementing the same ratio of wall length to the number of hides needed to man it. Domesday Book gives the same number of hides, 1,200, for Cheshire, as the Burghal Hidage figure for Worcester; and also appears

[18] G. Webster, 'Cheshire in the Dark Ages', *J.C.A.S.*, vol. 38, 1951, p. 46.
[19] F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edition, 1971, pp. 326, 334.
[20] Webster, 'Cheshire in the Dark Ages', p. 45; R. H. M. Dolley, 'The Mint of Chester', *J.C.A.S.*, vol. 42, 1955, pp. 2 f., 5 f.; J. Morris, *The Age of Arthur: A History of the British Isles 350-650*, 1973, p. 616.
[21] Webster, 'Cheshire in the Dark Ages', pp. 45 f.; Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire*, p. 59. But *see also* D. Mason, 'Pre-Conquest Chester — the Archaeological Evidence', *Cheshire Archaeological Bulletin*, vol. 3, 1975, pp. 12 f.
[22] F. H. Thompson, 'Excavations at Linenhall St., Chester', *J.C.A.S.*, vol. 56, 1969, p. 11.
[23] ibid., fig. 4.
[24] Webster, 'Cheshire in the Dark Ages', p. 46.
[25] D. Hill, 'The Burghal Hidage: the Establishment of a Text', *Medieval Archaeology*, vol. 13, 1969, pp. 84-92; *see especially* p. 92 and n. 32.

to indicate that the same formula was in force for Chester when it says: 'For the repair of the city wall the reeve was wont to call up one man for each hide in the county'.[26]

Others have found this argument convincing, including Professor P. H. Sawyer, who adds that Cheshire's assessment in the *County Hidage,* a document somewhat earlier than Domesday Book, 'is consistent with the division of that shire into twelve hundreds'.[27] There are, however, difficulties in accepting Hill's arithmetic. By his conversion ratio, Chester's *burh* walls should have been 1,650 yards long, and his estimate of about 1,710 yards is not far off this figure. Unfortunately, no one else's calculations come up with a comparable figure. Rahtz reckoned 'nearer 2,000 yards'; my calculation is about 2,200 yards, based on the large scale drawings published in this *Journal*; and a local archaeologist has recently estimated the fortress area as 65 acres, which would produce about 2,300 yards of wall.[28] Thus, documentary evidence does not exist which would substantiate archaeological findings, although equally it does nothing to challenge them.

Calculations of this sort also raise the question of whether the *burh,* meaning the walled area, was also the unit of habitation. It has been both asserted and denied that Saxon Gloucester had commercially active suburbs.[29] The case in Chester is quite clear. The burghal area, that is land on which lay burgage plots contributing to the *firma burgi,* without doubt extended beyond the *burh* walls to East and South, both before and after Aethelflaed's repair of them.[30] This is not unexpected in view of the loose social and military organisation which prevailed in the Dark Ages.

Saxon Parishes

St. John's parish is the obvious starting point, centred as it was on the extra mural church of St. John atop an outcrop of red sandstone known as Redcliff in Domesday Book.[31] The church's antiquity is demonstrated by later charters which rehearse long standing agreements between St. John's and St. Werburgh's to share burial rights for town and country within a seven mile radius.[32] The size of St. Werburgh's churchyard, 'large to compass it about', as the chronicler put it,[33]

[26] Tait, *Domesday Survey of Cheshire,* pp. 84 f.
[27] P. H. Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England,* 1978, pp. 228 f.
[28] Rahtz, 'West Mercian Towns', p. 116; cf. Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire,* p. 61; map of the Roman fortress by P. H. Lawson, in 'Schedule of Roman Remains of Chester', *J.C.A.S.,* new series, vol. 27, 1926-28, plate XXVI; P. Carrington, 'The Planning and Date of the Roman Legionary Fortress at Chester', *J.C.A.S.,* vol. 60, 1977, p. 35.
[29] Rahtz, 'West Mercian Towns', pp. 114 f., quoting Lobel and Hurst.
[30] J. Tait, *The Medieval English Borough,* 1936, p. 9, n. 7; cf. C. Stephenson, *Borough and Town,* 1933, pp. 194 f., 205.
[31] Tait, *Domesday Survey of Cheshire,* pp. 92 f.
[32] Tait, *Chartulary,* vol. 1, pp. 113 f., 117; vol. 2, Chetham Society, new series, vol. 82, 1923, p. 300.
[33] E. Hawkins, ed., *The . . . History of St. Werburge of Henry Bradshaw,* Chetham Society, 1st series, vol. 15, 1848, p. 151.

is especially notable, but a number of impressive Saxon and Scandinavian stone crosses have been found in St. John's churchyard and quarry.[34] The antiquity of the parish bounds may be deduced from the anomalous bite they took out of Fleshmongers Lane within the city. This would be the natural place to locate the eight town houses *intra civitatem* mentioned in Domesday Book as belonging to the Dean and Canons of the College.[35] Elsewhere, the survey speaks of the Bishop of Lichfield as holder of the land and privileges of the manor of Redcliff, but this reference points to the College's prior rights. The Bishop did not transfer his seat to the College until 1075, but Domesday Book records tenurial situations as essentially dating from King Edward the Confessor's time, and in this case, the possessions of the College are 'specifically and separately noticed' from the Bishop's.[36] As Tait suggested was the probable case, it was the Bishop who benefited from sharing the prestigious College's lands, rather than the other way about.[37]

However, Domesday Book also records the manor of Redcliff under the significant title of 'bishop's borough outside the city' (*episcopi burgus extra civitatem*), containing 56 houses which gelded with the city (about 13% of the total for Chester),[38] and these, like the Canons' houses, may be presumed to have been of pre Conquest origin, but for a different reason. A case quoted in the Domesday Book entry for Chester, shows that the city's burghal area of customary land was already well defined by the time of the Conquest, and was not easily altered. In this case, Robert de Rhuddlan, a kinsman of the Earl and the King,[39] claimed the land on which the church of St. Peter's stood, as his 'thegnland' or manorial estate, whose tenants were therefore his men, not burgesses. 'The county rejected the claim, asserting that the land belonged to the borough and always paid dues to the king and earl like other burgesses.'[40] Tait felt that a general principle was contained in this judgement.[41] If the extension of customary land, (that is, land containing landgable rents or burgages, in the strict sense of land conferring burghal status),[42] was as difficult as its reduction, then any scattered references from later medieval title deeds and wills may be taken as evidence for the original area of the Bishop's borough. Burgages were found in Foregate Street, St. John's Lane, and Cow Lane between 1240 and 1481, all held of the Bishop in chief, and Love Lane

[34] Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire*, pp. 76, 82.
[35] Tait, *Domesday Survey of Cheshire*, pp. 92 f. The bounds were possibly marked in later centuries by the watercourse described in Chester City R.O., Quarter Sessions file, 1603-04, Ref. QSF/52, f. 13.
[36] Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire*, p. 76.
[37] Tait, *Domesday Survey of Cheshire*, p. 27.
[38] ibid., pp. 78 f.
[39] F. C. Beazley, 'The Parish of Thurstaston', *T.H.S.L.C.*, vol. 75, 1923, p. 28.
[40] Tait, *Domesday Survey of Cheshire*, pp. 84 f.; cf. p. 29.
[41] Tait, *Medieval English Borough*, pp. 88 f.
[42] ibid., pp. 96 f., 99, 106 f.

was a 'capital lane' in 1397.[43] This points to the coincidence of the Bishop's borough with St. John's parish, with the exception of the eight houses in Fleshmongers Lane.

The situation described here is one common in parish history, and which will be met with again in the case of St. Mary's parish, whereby parish bounds are found to be closely, if not exactly, co terminous with extensive early seigneurial fiefs, even when the chief tenant was not the actual founder of the church in question.[44] It should be noted that the Bishop's holdings in St. John's parish remained intact even after his removal of the see to Coventry c. 1087.[45]

St. John's attraction to him lay in the commercial possibilities of its position athwart Foregate Street, along which most of the carts bearing bales of goods to the town market must have passed: Domesday Book records the fines the Bishop's officer was allowed to levy on merchants for unlicensed trading, privileges which Tait reckoned 'were, in all probability of no recent acquisition'.[46] The upper stretch of the Dee may also have borne some inland traffic. Masons were active in the quarry of Redcliff, and from the moment when leather working was adopted as a local industry (Domesday Book hints at its existence in the time of King Edward the Confessor),[47] Paynes Lode and Souters Lode, and possibly Flookers Brook, would have provided invaluable natural sources of running water. It looks very much as if the parish bounds were drawn in relation to them. Paynes Lode lay at right angles to the Bars, a point which Roman and medieval authorities seem to have accepted as a limit to the spread of settlement.[48] Souters Lode (Middle English for 'shoemakers' river passage')[49] would have formed the natural limit of the parish to the South West before the medieval wall was extended Southwards on top of the escarpment.

Thus, the large parish of St. John's, containing by the time of the Conquest about an eighth of Chester's burgess population, was at the same time both burghal and mainly suburban, a status which there are strong reasons for believing pre dated the Conquest, and therefore the Bishop's interest in it.

[43] *Foregate Street: 36th Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records,* 1875, Appendix II, p. 91 (7 messuages, 1349); *Catalogue of Ancient Deeds,* vol. 3, 1900, no. C 3291 (15 shops and gardens, 1446); Chester City R.O., Portmote Court roll, 1333, Ref. MR/35, m. 1. *St. John's Lane:* W. F. Irvine, 'Chester in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', *J.C.A.S.,* new series, vol. 10, 1904, p. 22 (dated c. 1240); Public Record Office, Rentals and Surveys, Ref. SC 11/891, m. 1 (dated 1481-82). *Cow Lane:* ibid., m. 2. *Love Lane: Cheshire Sheaf,* 3rd series, vol. 36, 1941, p. 9 (dated 1397).
[44] *See,* for example, Brooke and Keir, *London 800-1216,* pp. 129 ff.
[45] F. Barlow, *The English Church, 1066-1154,* 1979, p. 48.
[46] Tait, *Domesday Survey of Cheshire,* p. 27; cf. pp. 86 f.; cf. Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire,* p. 63.
[47] Tait, *Domesday Survey of Cheshire,* pp. 82 f.
[48] e.g. D. Mason, 'The Extra-Mural Area', in Strickland and Davey, eds., *New Evidence for Roman Chester,* p. 32; R. Stewart-Brown, ed., *Calendar of County Court, City Court and Eyre Rolls of Chester 1259-1297,* Chetham Society, new series, 84, 1925, p. 204 (dated 1296).
[49] Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', pp. 42 f.

The bulk of the intramural population would originally have been parishioners of the other Saxon church to have enjoyed burial rights, St. Peter and St. Paul, later St. Werburgh's. This definition excludes St. Chad's from consideration, for although it may well have been in existence from any time after the end of the 7th century (when Ceadda, Bishop of Lichfield, died), and although it may even have had endowments of land, no authority believes it was parochial.[50]

The bounds of St. Peter and St. Paul took in a kitchen garden outside the Eastern wall (Kaleyards means 'vegetable garden'), to which the Canons must from the first have had access, although a gate is not mentioned until 1274.[51] Recent excavations in the North East corner of the walls, reveal that the church grounds included a site of nearly continuous occupation throughout the Dark Ages. No fewer than four 'sub Roman' layers of the 5th and 6th centuries have been found with traces of, successively, a timber building and pebble surfaced road, metal working, and ploughing. In the later Saxon period, 'activity on the site ranged from widespread quarrying and stone robbing to the digging of various kinds of pits'.[52] The Southern part of the church's precinct long remained blocked by the rubble of Roman buildings, particularly at the junction of the later Eastgate Street and Northgate Street. The dog's leg path of St. Werburgh's Lane, which must be of considerable antiquity because it describes the extent of the church-yard,[53] skirted round the back of three barrack blocks with hypocausts, to find an exit into the Eastern half of Eastgate Street.[54] This lane was not adopted as a parish boundary until St. Oswald's parish was formally distinguished from St. Werburgh's in 1509.[55] Thus for the first two centuries or so of its existence, St. Peter and St. Paul's parish would have embraced the whole intramural area, with the exception of part of Fleshmongers Lane, and possibly of any lands pertaining to St. Chad's.

From information given so far, it is in order to postulate certain streets and lanes as probably or possibly in use prior to Aethelflaed's works. For clarity's sake, these are tabulated in Table 2. The list is, of course, only a minimal count.

Only the last two entries need explanation. Mr. J. McN. Dodgson has observed that the more prominent of the perimeter thoroughfares, those asterisked in the table, were at some time in the Middle Ages dignified with the name 'street' (as St. John's Street, Pepper Street, Crofts Street or Greyfriars Lane, Bereward Street or Alban Lane), and are 'approximately relative to the plan of the Roman town'.[56]

[50] Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire*, pp. 33 f.; Jones, *Church in Chester*, p. 8. The question of tithes on the land is dealt with below.
[51] Morris, *Chester*, p. 241.
[52] J. C. McPeake, Margaret Bulmer, and Janet A. Rutter, 'Excavations in the Garden of No. 1 Abbey Green, Chester, 1975-77', *J.C.A.S.*, vol. 63, 1980, p. 21.
[53] F. H. Thompson, 'Excavations on the Site of Woolworth's', *J.C.A.S.*, vol. 54, 1967, p. 14.
[54] As shown, for example, in Lawson's map, *J.C.A.S.*, new series, vol. 27, 1926-28, plate XXVI; or F. H. Thompson, *Roman Cheshire*, 1965; or Strickland and Davey, eds., *New Evidence for Roman Chester*, p. 4.
[55] Morris, *Chester*, p. 135, n. 15.
[56] Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', pp. 47 f.

TABLE 2

THOROUGHFARES LIKELY TO HAVE EXISTED
IN THE SAXON PERIOD

PROBABLE

Bridge Street	defined by front of *schola* building.
Upper Northgate Street, Eastgate Street, East, St. Werburgh's Lane	defined the precinct of the church which became St. Werburgh's.
Fleshmongers Lane	college of St. John's lands.
Foregate Street	led to Eastgate Street.
St. John's Lane*, Little St. John's Lane	skirted ruins of amphitheatre and defined position of St. John's Church.
Souters Lode, Paynes Lode	natural features probably approached by paths.
Cow Lane	defined the joint bounds of St. John's and the later St. Werburgh's.

POSSIBLE

Love Lane	'capital lane' in 1397 suggests there were burgages on it.
Pepper Street*, Cuppins Lane, Greyfriars Lane*, Blackfriars Lane, Dee Lane (outside Northgate).	delineated the outer perimeter of the Roman wall.
Alban Lane,* Trinity Lane, Whitefriars Lane, Pepper Alley.	delineated the inner perimeter of the Roman wall.

* Lanes at some time in the Middle Ages known as 'streets'.

Excavation has confirmed these streets' proximity to the alignment of actual Roman *intervalla* roads or *viae sagulares*.[57] Moreover, these postulated early streets and lanes, seem by and large to have avoided crossing the line of any Roman structures as they have been excavated or plausibly reconstructed, suggesting something about the amount of the Roman layout which survived into Saxon times, and about Saxon settlers' regard for it.[58]

Aethelflaed's attention to Chester in 907, went beyond repairing its defences, to a reorganisation of its intramural churches, involving a dramatic manipulation of Christian symbols for the purposes of propaganda against Mercia's enemies. The Mercian warrior Lady elevated Werburgh, a pious Mercian princess whose name in Anglo Saxon meant 'protectress of the *burh*', into the new patron saint of St. Peter and St. Paul, where her relics had lain for some twenty years. Aethelflaed may even have been responsible for the relics' transference in the first place.[59] Room was also found in the rededicated church for a relic of St. Oswald, a Northumbrian martyr whose cult reflected contemporary struggles.[60] St. Peter, premier saint of Christendom and patron of the first church at Rome, was given a new home in a church erected on a forward part of the portico of the massive Roman *principia*. This central site itself benefited from restoration of the four principal axes of the Roman fortress, dictated by Aethelflaed's repair of the walls and gates. Indeed, the Roman layout was made properly cruciform by 'excavating the southern portion of Northgate St through the fallen debris on the east side [of St. Peter's].'[61] This symbolism, worked to death by the monk Lucian in *De Laude Cestriae,* at the end of the 12th century, must nevertheless have been conscious and effective in Aethelflaed's day, and appears to have been taken up on some of the coinage of the period.[62]

A parish was created for St. Peter's by detaching a fragment of St. Werburgh's, probably along the lines of the land holdings of St. Werburgh's, and a lay patron of St. Peter's. Lay patronage for the latter may be inferred from the church's lack of burial rights. The shape of the division of the parishes made along Eastgate Street, is eloquent of the role played by property (*see* Fig. 1). St. Peter's parish is actually bisected by two burgage shaped projections from St. Werburgh's, the Northern one coinciding with Godstall Lane, a passage way which remained open

[57] e.g. Thompson, 'Excavations at Linenhall St.', pp. 4 f.; F. H. Thompson and F. W. Tobias, 'Excavations in Newgate Street, Chester, 1955', *J.C.A.S.,* vol. 44, 1957, p. 34 (Road 3); McPeake, Bulmer, and Rutter, 'Excavations in the Garden of No. 1 Abbey Green', p. 21.
[58] Cf. Thompson, 'Excavations at Linenhall St.', p. 13, on squatters; but for Northgate Street, *see* below.
[59] Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire*, p. 34.
[60] ibid., pp. 31, 34.
[61] Section by P. H. Lawson in P. H. Lawson and J. T. Smith, 'The Rows of Chester: Two Interpretations', *J.C.A.S.,* vol. 45, 1958, p. 25.
[62] Margerie V. Taylor, ed., *Liber Luciani de Laude Cestrie,* R.S.L.C., vol. 64, 1912, pp. 46 f.; Dolley, 'Mint of Chester', p. 5; cf. Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire*, pp. 75 f., plate 11.

until the Dissolution, linking St. Werburgh's churchyard to the street.[63] Similarly, descendants of the Robert de Rhuddlan who claimed the land on which St. Peter's stood in 1086, held a number of properties on Eastgate Street, including one bound to the church by the service of finding a candle 'for land'.[64] Tenurial links of this sort illustrate the basis on which the more eccentric boundary divisions were made. To the West and South, St. Peter's parish must have extended to the *burh* walls.

Scandinavian Parishes and St. Michael's

The bounds of St. Bridget's, St. Olave's, and St. Michael's were interlocked in a similar way, but their elucidation is more complex, and there remain more uncertainties (*see* Fig. 2). None of them is mentioned in Domesday Book, but that does not prove that they were not in existence at the time.[65] St. Michael's has no clear cultural associations by which to date it, and the problems are compounded by the difficulty of dating the adjacent St. Mary's, and the Southern wall extension. Long ago, Dr. G. Webster pointed to the dedications of St. Bridget's and St. Olave's as evidence of a riverside settlement of Irish Norse traders handling goods from Dublin, and other Viking routes; and others have shown that the area is rich in Scandinavian associations.[66] St. Bridget's Church surmounted the Southern wall over the site of a Roman gate tower, a characteristic shared by St. Michael's. Wall top sites were not uncommon for churches of this time, especially those dedicated to the warrior saint Michael.[67] Dodgson's assumption that these two churches, and later Holy Trinity to the West, could not have been founded on this line until the Roman/Saxon wall had been demolished, is unnecessary.[68]

St. Bridget's and St. Michael's also extended to a similar depth within the wall, and were neatly divided from each other by Bridge Street. The Northern limits of St. Michael's parish were marked by a passage way along the North side of the massive Roman *schola* building.[69] The Northern limits of St. Bridget's described a similar path on the opposite side of Bridge Street. This symmetry may be evidence of contemporary creation. The original name of the lane along

[63] R. M. Montgomery, 'Some Early Deeds relating to . . . Eastgate Street', *J.C.A.S.*, new series, vol. 22, 1918, pp. 125 f., 129 ff., 132; cf. Irvine, 'Chester in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', p. 39 (dated 1283).

[64] Irvine, 'Chester in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', p. 27 (dated 1260); cf. Tait, *Chartulary*, vol. 2, p. 343 (dated 1265-91); *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 36, 1941, p. 32 (dated 1393).

[65] Tait, *Domesday Survey of Cheshire*, p. 30; *pace* Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', p. 48.

[66] Webster, 'Cheshire in the Dark Ages', p. 46; cf. Brooke and Keir, *London 800-1216*, pp. 139-41; Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', pp. 50-52.

[67] J. Brownbill, 'Ancient Church Dedications in Cheshire and South Lancashire', *T.H.S.L.C.*, vol. 54, 1902, pp. 34 f.

[68] Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', p. 48.
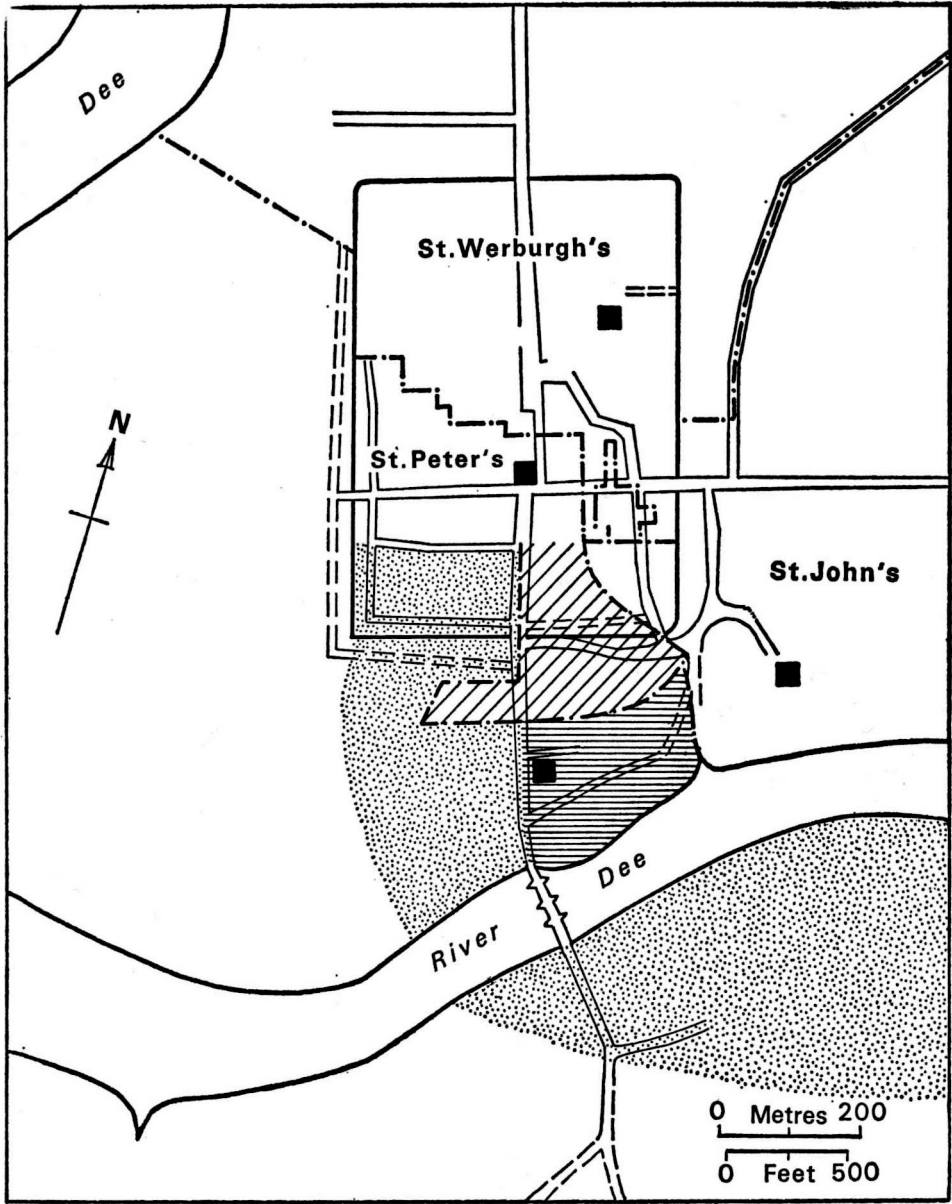
[69] *See* the maps referred to above, n. 28.

Fig. 2 — Parishes on the eve of the Conquest

which St. Bridget's Northern bounds ran, Norman's (that is, Norwegian's) Lane, was appropriate to the Norsemen's parish, even if it came indirectly through a family name.[70] In this connection, the pattern traced by burgage plots between Watergate Street and Whitefriars Lane, suggests that they had been laid out before Norman's Lane was drawn, and that the block had been previously divided by a lane running North to South, the upper stretch of which exists as Old Hall Place (*see* Fig. 3). The local importance of the Norse in the 10th and 11th centuries is thus strikingly demonstrated by the accommodation made for them within the *burh* walls. Equally striking is St. Bridget's extent outside the walls, for it included a large detached block of fields on the South bank of the river, just where Domesday Book records a patch of land measured in carucates, a 'Danish' measure, in an otherwise largely hidated county.[71] The two parts clearly were once one, but became separated by the later intrusion of St. Mary's, and the Norman Earls' Castle demesne.

St. Michael's parish may also have suffered some contraction on its Southern boundaries in favour of St. Olave's, as Dodgson has argued.[72] A feature of St. Michael's parish requiring explanation, is the fragment of it which projects onto the West side of Lower Bridge Street. Like the irregular outline of St. Peter's, this may point to a plot of land which the patron, or a prominent parishioner, was anxious to include or retain within the parish. Excavation has established that this site, 'mid-way between Castle Lane and Grosvenor St extending westwards for a distance of 45 metres', (that is, Victoria Street), was continuously occupied from the 9th century, and contained on successive layers two timber huts, then two large timber structures of the 10th century, and finally, in the early 11th century, several tanning pits and stone lined water troughs.[73] The latter finds indicate the landholder's heavy investment in leather processing. We are not to suppose that the site excavated represents the whole of the developed area, but it gives a glimpse of the value of ground in the vicinity.

St. Michael's and St. Bridget's Churches could have been dedicated at any time in the 10th or 11th centuries. However, for St. Olave's, the *terminus post* is 1030, when King Olaf of Norway was slain by Cnut, or perhaps 1035 when Cnut himself died, and the *terminus ante* is some time before 1119, when we hear of the confirmation of its grant to St. Werburgh's by Richard Butler, a Norman official.[74] The circumstances of this award, indicate that the church had been in existence long enough to reach and pass a peak of prosperity. Dodgson, pointing to the survival of Norse names in an anglicised form in the neighbourhood of St. Olave's, speculated that the Scandinavian community was losing its distinctive identity

[70] Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', pp. 35 n. 46, 39 n. 81.
[71] I. B. Terrett, 'Cheshire', in H. C. Darby and I. S. Maxwell, eds., *The Domesday Geography of Northern England*, 1977, pp. 337 f.
[72] Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', p. 52.
[73] Mason, 'Pre-Conquest Chester — the Archaeological Evidence', pp. 40 f.
[74] Tait, *Chartulary*, vol. 1, pp. 40 f.

Fig. 3 — Possible alignment of burgage plots in the Saxon period,
Watergate Street: based on O.S. 1:2500 sheet, 3rd edition, 1911

by 1119.[75] Before that occurred, a local Norse landowner's name was attached to Wolfeld Gate (that is, Ulfaldi) in the medieval East wall,[76] although the name may have been transferred from the gate which probably existed in the *burh* wall at the end of Fleshmongers Lane. St. Olave's importance should anyway not be exaggerated: even within the Norse community, it was far less well endowed than St. Bridget's.

Burghal rights would appear to have attached to the extramural area covered by the three Southern parishes. Domesday Book records three burgages and 37 burgesses 'in the city', but belonging to outside manors, one of which was Claverton. Presumably Claverton Lane owed its name to such a tenurial link with an out burgess.[77] Claverton manor also had four burgesses in Handbridge, an independent vill on the South bank of the Dee. Moreover, the fact that the renders of all 44 out burgesses were expressed in 'ores', is further proof of Scandinavian dominance in this suburb.

This block of Southern parishes implies the existence of Lower Bridge Street, part of Handbridge, Norman's (later Commonhall) Lane, St. Olave's Lane, and Claverton Lane, the latter describing the then escarpment overlooking the Dee.

St. Mary's on the Hill

The arrival of the Normans signalled a new round of parish formation and wall building, which brings the South Western and Western sectors into focus. Although there is no positive demonstration of St. Mary's date of foundation, all its associations are Norman. It was given to St. Werburgh's Abbey by Earl Ranulph II (1129-53), and the monk Lucian, writing between 1190 and 1195, pictures 'the earl, the head of the citizens, observing divine services with his court at St. Mary's'.[78] Moreover, St. Mary's parish was the natural home of the Earl's servants and retainers, those who victualled the Castle, and those who invested the profits of seigneurial service in estates round the Castle. Many local place names record such families: Bunce Lane, Raby Lane (later Shipgate Street), Poyntz's Crofts, Paris Place, and the Troutbeck Chapel.[79] Nuns Lane commemorates the Nunnery of St. Mary founded by the fourth Earl.[80] Castle Lane speaks for itself.

The small city portion of the parish where these names are found, was the head of a much larger fief that spread South of the river where its bounds coincided

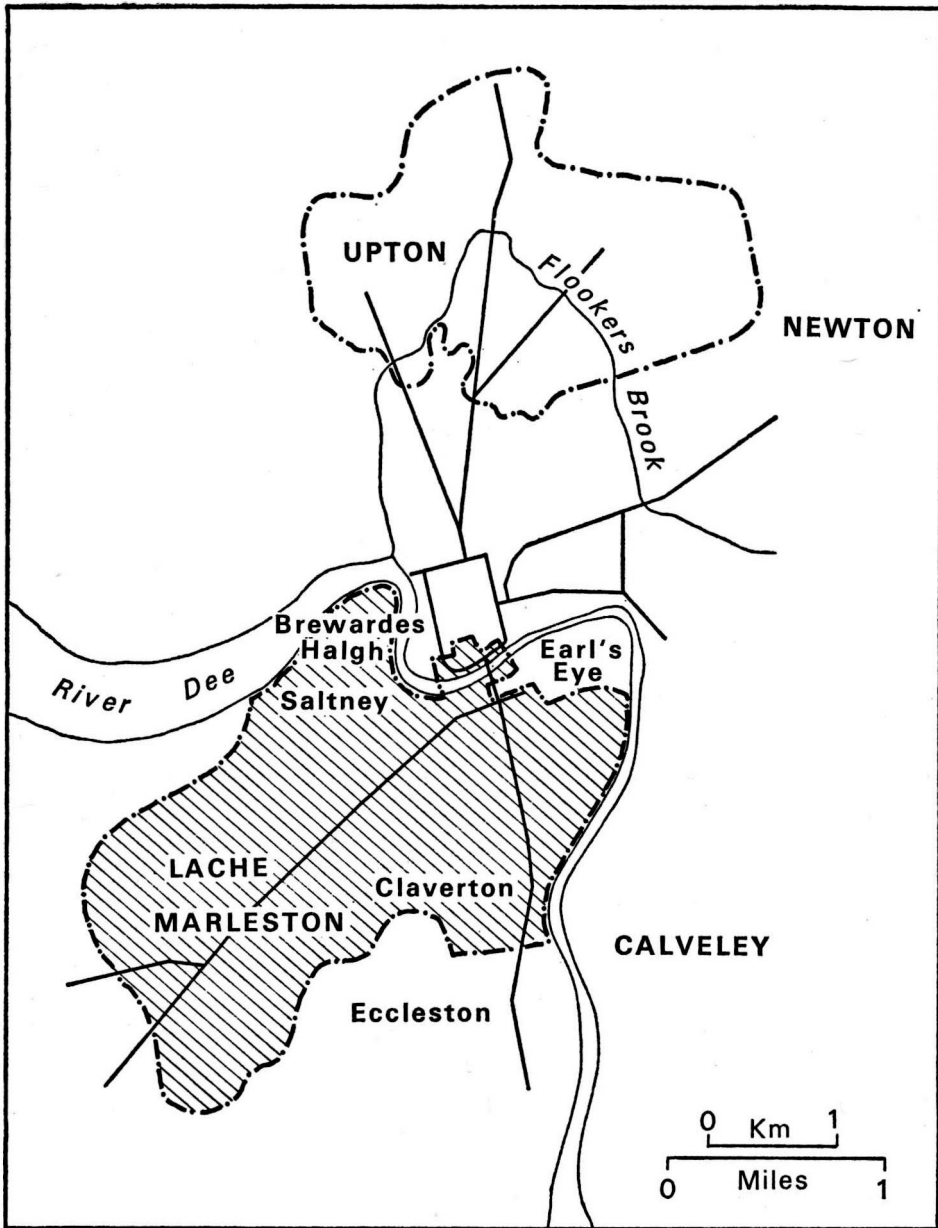[75] Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', pp. 52 f.
[76] ibid., pp. 50-52.
[77] Tait, *Domesday Survey of Cheshire*, p. 37.
[78] Tait, *Chartulary*, vol. 1, p. 59; *Liber Luciani*, p. 61; cf. Jones, *Church in Chester*, p. 113.
[79] In general, *see* Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', pp. 39-41. *Bunce*: Morris, *Chester*, p. 568; *26th Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records*, 1865, Appendix, p. 37. *Raby and Poyntz*: Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, vol. 2, pp. 546-48. *Paris*: *Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, vol. 6, 1915, no. C 4706; Lawson and Smith, 'The Rows of Chester', pp. 8 f. *Troutbeck Chapel*: J. Brownbill, 'The Troutbeck Family', *J.C.A.S.*, new series, vol. 28, 1929, pp. 149 f., 157; cf. A. R. Myers, ed., *English Historical Documents*, vol. 4, 1969, p. 732.
[80] *Victoria History of Cheshire*, vol. 3, 1980, p. 146.

UPTON

NEWTON

Flookers Brook

River Dee

Brewardes
Halgh

Earl's
Eye

Saltney

LACHE

Claverton

MARLESTON

CALVELEY

Eccleston

0 Km 1

0 Miles 1

—·—·—·— St.Mary's parish boundary   ▨ Castle Demesne

LACHE Vills in which the Earl held manors at D.B.

Fig. 4 — Castle demesne and St. Mary's parish in the Norman period

closely with the upper part of the hundred of Broxton. Prior to the Conquest, the hundred represented a typical 'Danish' wapentake or military district, centring upon a defensible post which in this case was not the *burh* but Castle Hill.[81] The number and value of the Mercian Earls' manors in this hundred, indicate their interest in it.[82] The Norman Earls retained most of the manors in the hundred, which continued to function as an administrative unit,[83] but also delineated a specific Castle demesne, presumably for the joint purposes of victualling and defence (*see* Fig. 4).

This joint function is illustrated North of the river by the sergeanty of Bridge Gate, which was linked with the wardenship of the Castle garden, and carried the duty of supplying the Castle with vegetables during the Earl's residence from Michaelmas to Lent, and leeks during his Lenten fast.[84] The demesne here ran in a wide sweep round the foot of the Castle, taking in the site of the Nunnery and Poyntz's Crofts.[85] To the South of the river, to go by a 13th century description, the demesne embraced 'the island called Earl's Eye, from the Dee Bridge, round the Dee to Claverton ford, and thence to Newbold dyke, thence to Handbridge, and back to the bridge'; Brewardes Halgh; 'the moor and marsh of Saltney'; and Marleston and Lache 'with bounds touching Eccleston and Handbridge'; making a total of 305 acres.[86] So described, the demesne fits St. Mary's parish very closely, without being exactly co terminous: St. Mary's lacked Earl's Eye, which was a detached portion of St. Bridget's, and it lost the site of the Nunnery to St. Martin's.[87] Thus parish, demesne, and to some extent hundred, represented functionally differentiated aspects of the same territory. Under the Earls' unifying authority, St. Mary's parish intruded upon St. Bridget's, and possibly the Southern part of St. Olave's, in order to secure the bridge, the Castle's Eastern flank, and the site of the Dee corn mills, a vital manorial monopoly.

Southern Walls

Part and parcel of the process whereby these Southern parishes achieved their final shape was the extension of the borough walls (*see* Fig. 5).

These are unlikely to be datable by archaeology, as their fabric has so often been repaired and replaced.[88] Timber may even have been used initially, as it was for the Outer Bailey of the Castle.[89] Documentary sources offer assistance in this direction. Two charters of c. 1121-29 record respectively the sergeanty of

[81] Morris, *Age of Arthur*, p. 616.
[82] Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Cheshire*, map between pp. 84 and 85.
[83] *See* Tait's map in *Domesday Survey of Cheshire*.
[84] Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, vol. 2, pp. 546-48.
[85] Irvine, 'Notes on the History of St. Mary's Nunnery', p. 92 (dated c. 1150); Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, vol. 1, p. 346 (dated c. 1121-29).
[86] *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, vol. 2, 1906, p. 283 (dated 1285).
[87] *See* below, Fig. 6.
[88] H. L. Turner, *Town Defences in England and Wales 900-1500*, 1971, pp. 202 f.
[89] Morris, *Chester*, p. 93.

Map labels

St.Werburgh's

St. Peter's

St. Bridget's

St. Michael's

St.John's

River Dee

St.Bridget's

N

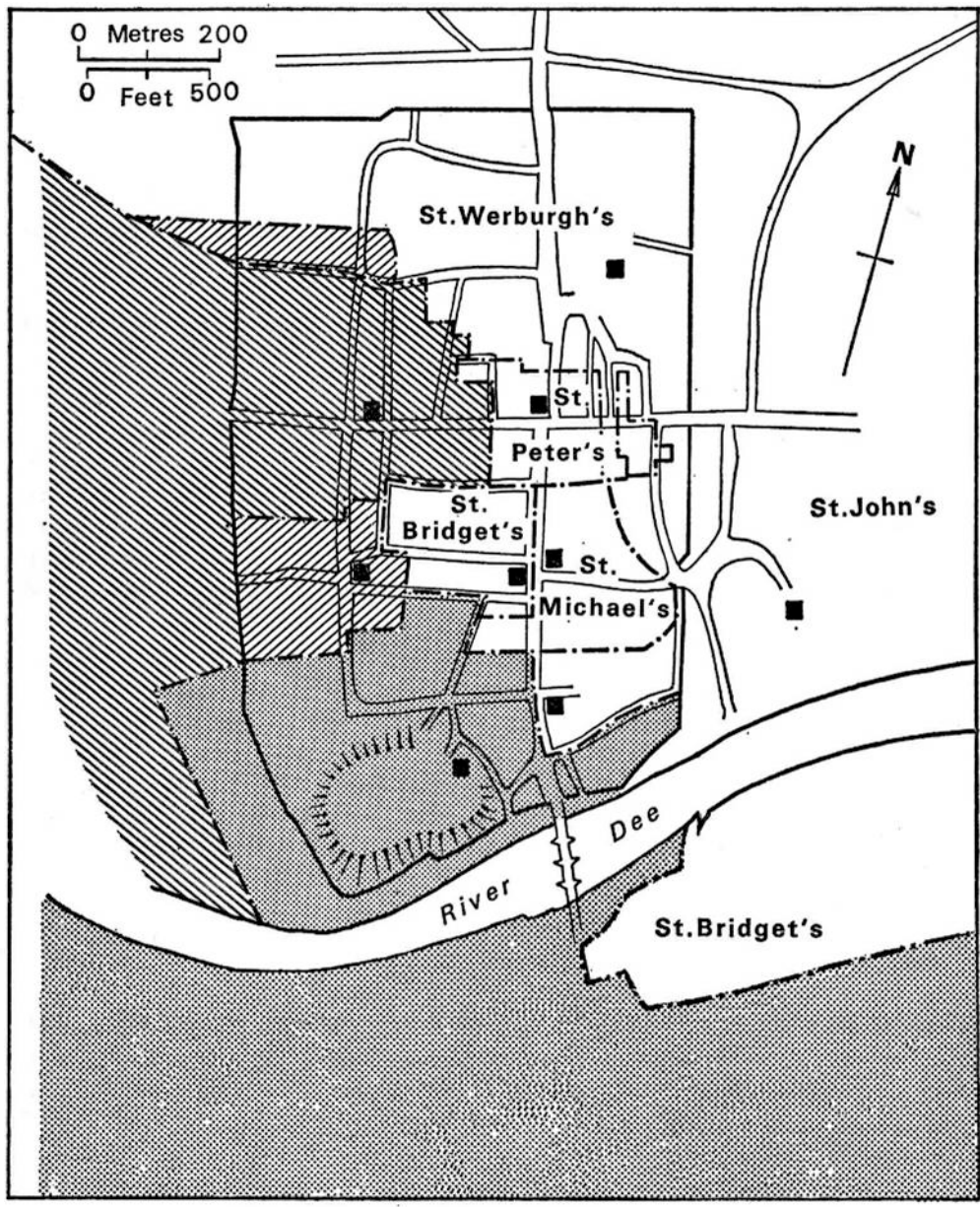| Metres | 200 |
| Feet | 500 |

St.Mary's   Holy Trinity   St.Martin's

Churches

Fig. 5 — Norman parishes c. 1200

Bridge Gate and the 'Clippe Gate', evidently a 13th century copyist's error for 'Shippe Gate'.[90] These sources point to a firm completion date for the Southern stretch of wall some fifty to sixty years after the Norman arrival in Chester, a date which conflicts neither with Dodgson's philological, nor Mason's geographical desiderata.[91] They envisage an outside date of the late 12th century, but the closer the date of the wall's completion is bought to the Conquest, the more likely it is to have formed part of an integrated defensive unit linking Castle and bridge, and making best use of the terrain by fortifying the escarpment edge to East and South. The South side, facing the perennial enemy Wales, was the most vulnerable.[92] The Castle was begun in 1070 on William I's orders, immediately after his capture of the city and creation of the Norman Earldom, although the first mention of expenditure on it does not come till nearly a century later.[93]

The Southern wall's alignment was dictated by purely strategic considerations, which, as was not uncommon in medieval towns, took little account of existing legal and social boundaries.[94] Located on the brow of a natural escarpment that descended steeply to the Dee and Souters Lode, it was automatically provided with water defences, but at the expense of a retrenchment to St. Olave's Eastern boundary. This explains the anomalous tongue of land thrusting forward to Wolfeld Gate, consisting of the road surface minus houses, which when they were built, belonged within St. Michael's parish. In itself this relic of land had no value or purpose, but commemorates a probably Norse landowner's estate descending to the banks of the lode.

Western Wall, St. Martin's, and Holy Trinity

Attempts to date the medieval wall extension to South and West have been bedevilled so far by the assumption that it took place in both directions simultaneously; but the dates for the two stretches are really irreconcilable.[95] There is, however, no need to reconcile them, for it was not uncommon for medieval towns to construct their *enceinte* piecemeal over a long period. Gloucester, Hull, Norwich, and Newcastle took about fifty years, and Coventry an exceptional 200 years.[96] At Chester, any extension on the Western side would have had to wait

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[90] Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, vol. 1, p. 356; *pace* Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', p. 50; Tait, *Chartulary*, vol. 1, p. 49, as recited in a copy of 1285, emended in *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 47, 1952, p. 6.

[91] Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', p. 52; Mason, 'Chester: the Evolution and Adaptation of its Landscape', p. 19.
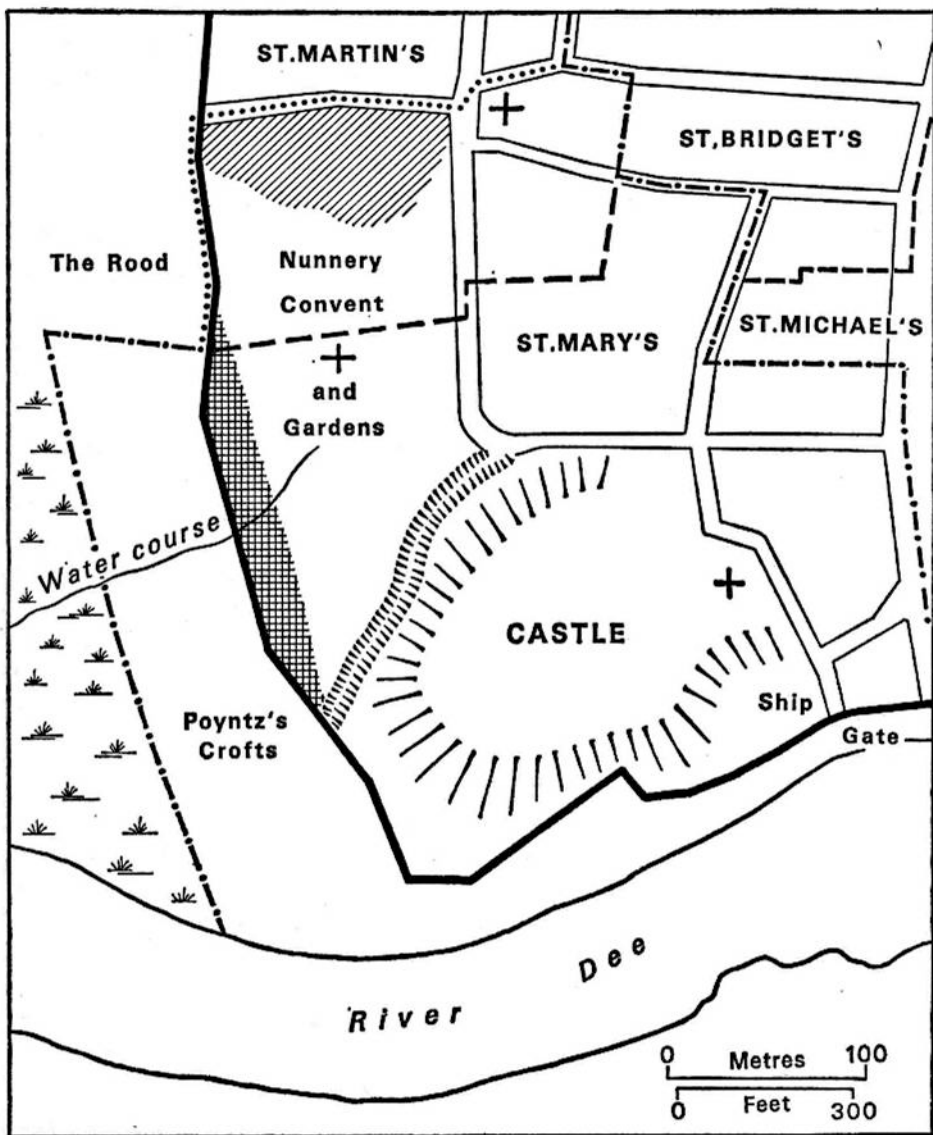
[92] A. L. Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, 1951, pp. 291 ff.; cf. *Liber Luciani*, p. 52; R. Stewart-Brown, 'The Old Dee Bridge at Chester', *J.C.A.S.*, new series, vol. 30, 1933, pp. 65 f.

[93] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 605 (based on Orderic Vitalis); E. S. Armitage, *Early Norman Castles*, 1912, pp. 127 f. (dated 1159).

[94] Turner, *Town Defences*, p. 56.

[95] Thompson, 'Excavations at Linenhall St.', p. 13; cf. p. 11.

[96] Turner, *Town Defences*, p. 50; M. D. Lobel and J. Tann, 'Gloucester', in M. D. Lobel, ed., *Atlas of Historic Towns*, vol. 1, 1969, pp. 6 f.; C. Platt, *The English Medieval Town*, 1976, p. 42.

ST.MARTIN'S

ST.BRIDGET'S

The Rood

Nunnery
Convent

ST.MARY'S   ST.MICHAEL'S

and
Gardens

Water course

CASTLE

Poyntz's
Crofts

Ship

Gate

River   D e e

| 0 | Metres | 100 |
| 0 | Feet | 300 |

— City wall

••••••• Castle Demesne

‑‑‑‑ · Parish boundary

⁞⁞⁞⁞⁞ Castle ditch

✝ Church, convent

▦ Probable site of land once part of
Poyntz's Crofts, then granted to nuns

▨ Probable site of Kitchen Crofts/
land granted to Munitor family

Marshland subject to occasional
flooding

Fig. 6 — South West sector, c. 1200

until the creek drained off, or was artificially filled in. This process was complete, except for a water course conducting rain water from the site, by about 1150, when the Nunnery was built directly over it.[97] Elsewhere, the ground to the West of the Roman wall had been dry and solid enough, even in Roman times, to support extensive stone structures equipped with hypocausts and sunken furnaces.[98] However, the circumstances and timing of the medieval enclosure of this sector remain complex, because they were closely related to a long term development of the whole site, the stages of which can be reconstructed in outline from details given in a number of 12th and 13th century charters (*see* Fig. 6).[99]

In c. 1121-29, one Poyns was granted land by the Countess, which it is reasonable to connect with what later became known as Poyntz's Crofts: a broad arc of arable land stretching from a point 200 yards North of the junction of Grosvenor Street with the walls, to fifty yards South of it. The only landmark cited in the grant is the Castle 'nearby'. Since Poyns was warden of the Castle garden, his land probably stretched continuously from this garden, marked in 1181 by a ditch created by quarrying, but not otherwise enclosed, Westwards to the cultivable part of the Roodee. Diagonally across this land, at a South Westerly tangent to the Castle hill, ran a footpath and the water course mentioned above, representing ancient rights of way which had to be respected when the wall was built: hence the sally port or postern here. Other examples are Truant's Hole opposite Dog Lane, and possibly another linking Oxe Lane and Bag Lane. Thus Poyntz's Crofts probably originally straddled the line of the later wall. The bounds of St. Mary's parish similarly straddled this line, coinciding with the Castle demesne.

The Nuns were granted a parcel of demesne land to the North West of the Castle garden when work started on their conventual buildings from about 1150. The Western wall is first mentioned about 1220, in a grant to the Nuns of an anomalous strip of land lying 'along the wall of the city, between it and their crofts'. Had the wall been in existence when the Nunnery was built, it would surely have been adopted as their Western boundary. In fact, it must have come later, and followed not estate boundaries but the contour line of most strategic

[97] Irvine, 'Notes on the History of St. Mary's Nunnery', p. 103 (dated c. 1281); cf. p. 92.
[98] Mason, 'The Extra-Mural Area', pp. 35 f.
[99] The following sources were used for Fig. 6. *For Poyns and Poyntz's Crofts*: Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, vol. 1, p. 356; vol. 2, p. 546 (dated c. 1121-29); *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 47, 1952, pp. 12, 14. *For the Castle demesne*: Irvine, 'Notes on the History of St. Mary's Nunnery', 92; cf. note 86 above. *Castle ditch and quarry*: *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 47, 1952, p. 14; cf. p. 6; Morris, *Chester*, p. 99 (dated c. 1181-1253). *Nunnery founded*: Irvine, 'Notes on the History of St. Mary's Nunnery', p. 92; *V.C.H. Cheshire*, vol. 3, p. 146 (dated c. 1150). *The wall by the Nunnery*: Irvine, 'Notes on the History of St. Mary's Nunnery', p. 98 (dated c. 1220). *Site of Nunnery*: *V.C.H. Cheshire*, vol. 3, p. 149; R. Newstead, 'Records of Archaeological Finds', *J.C.A.S.*, new series, vol. 36, 1948, pp. 162-65; Morris, *Chester*, p. 141 (reproducing the sketch of 1750); *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 19, 1922, pp. 86 f. *Watercourse and footpath*: Irvine, 'Notes on the History of St. Mary's Nunnery', p. 103 (dated c. 1281). *Sally-ports*: Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, map of Chester in 1823; *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 40, 1945, pp. 38 f.; vol. 47, 1952, p. 14; cf. Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', pp. 33 ff.

use. Hence Poyntz's Crofts were excluded, and the Nuns' land spread a little to the West. The actual site of the Nunnery can be deduced from the line of their garden wall; excavated graves which probably mark their cemetery; and Buck's sketch of the ruins c. 1750, which, from a viewpoint due West of the site, shows the Outer Bailey of the Castle rising behind and to the right. The church and cloisters were excavated in 1964.

Between the Nuns' estate and St. Martin's Church, was a third parcel of land demised by the Earl to servants of his with the significant family name of Munitor or Fortifier, first recorded about 1215.[100] One member of this family succeeded Poyns as warden of the Castle garden, and another, inheriting the office, enjoyed 'daily livery of food and drink at his house'.[101] Perhaps, then, this estate may be identified with the 'Kitchen Crofts' which paid tithes to St. Martin's Church.[102]

The relation of the bounds of Holy Trinity and St. Martin's parishes to the Western wall helps narrow the dating of the wall (*see* Fig. 5). St. Martin's, first heard of about 1190-95,[103] stood in the corridor between the old *burh* wall, and the new extension, in a way that looks as if the parish was fitted into existing defensive lines. This gives us a *terminus ante*. By contrast, the bounds of Holy Trinity extended beyond the new wall, which may therefore have succeeded the church's foundation. It is first heard of in 1188, but a dedication in that name is possible any time after the mid 12th century.[104] Thus, all the evidence for the Western medieval wall points to the period between 1150 and 1188, some decades after the Southern wall was complete.

Holy Trinity was not originally the imposing steepled structure familiar from 16th and 17th century maps, but a small church (*edicula* in Lucian) set atop the *burh* walls on the foundations of one of the Roman gate towers (*porta praetoria dextra*).[105] Lucian writes in terms which, however inflated and allegorical, suggest that St. Peter's was within living memory 'entrusted with Watergate', but that Holy Trinity was later erected 'to defend [St. Peter] from the sea.' He also hints at some obscure connection between the priests of the two churches, which may record the fact that the parish of the one was partly carved out of the other. Fundamentally, however, Holy Trinity's parish bounds reflected the possessions of its lay patrons, the Barons of Montalt.[106] To the extent that these lay partly

[100] Irvine, 'Notes on the History of St. Mary's Nunnery', p. 97 (dated c. 1215).
[101] Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, vol. 2, p. 546; E. E. Barker, ed., *Talbot Deeds 1200-1682*, R.S.L.C., vol. 103, 1948, pp. 15 (dated c. 1229), 32 (dated 1370); *Close Rolls, 1247-51*, 1922, p. 341 (dated 1250); Morris, *Chester*, p. 570 (dated 1353). Barker reads the name as *minutor*, meaning barber-surgeon, but is alone in doing so.
[102] *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 59, 1964, p. 5 (dated 1696); *Notitia Cestrensis*, p. 104 (18th century).
[103] *Liber Luciani*, p. 51.
[104] Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', p. 48. The dating of the dedication was suggested by Dr. Thacker.
[105] *Liber Luciani*, p. 51; Thompson, 'Excavations at Linenhall St.', pp. 5 f., and fig.
[106] *Notitia Cestrensis*, pp. 121 f.; W. A. Hulton, ed., *The Coucher Book . . . of Whalley Abbey*, vol. 2, Chetham Soc., 1st series, vol. 11, 1847, pp. 354 f.

outside the new wall, they threatened to expand as the River Dee contracted. Although in 1401 the citizens successfully claimed the Roodee as common land, free of tithes to the Rector of Holy Trinity, on the grounds that it had been won from the sea,[107] the church was more than compensated by covering the whole of Blacon Marsh. Church Commissioners surveying Holy Trinity's lands in 1696, were at a loss to explain these possessions: 'When or by whom this composition was made we know not.'[108] No doubt the parish 'just growed'. Interestingly, St. Mary's did not expand to cover any more of the Roodee than was occupied by Poyntz's Crofts. From the early 14th century, a marker was in position at its North West point in the form of a cross or rood, contributing the second name element to what had previously been merely 'Eyam', or the island.[109]

St. Martin's parish included an anomalous detached fragment to the North of the Crofts. These are the 'seven butts in Lady Barrow's Hey' recorded as tithing to St. Martin's in 1676.[110] It probably came to the church by endowment by a wealthy parishioner, but since it included land on which St. Chad's had stood, there may be a case for saying that it had originally supported that chantry, and was only acquired by St. Martin's after St. Chad's abandonment.[111]

Another chapel, St. Nicholas', stood in the parish of Holy Trinity opposite the Black Friars, who may have worshipped there, as they were known as the Dominican Friars of St. Nicholas.[112] However, they did not found it, for it is referred to a decade or two before their arrival in Chester.[113]

Such a plethora of churches and chapels, attested such a short time after the enclosure of what had once been fields, raises the question of the purpose of this Western extension. Primarily, of course, by bringing the walls to the edge of the natural ridge, part of which was still at this time the water's edge, at least at high tide, it effected improved strategic occupation of the site, in particular defence of the Castle's Western flank and the Nunnery buildings. Possibly, it also provided better facilities for landing water borne cargoes. According to Lucian, Chester still had 'a refuge for ships on the southern side', presumably at Ship Gate and Bridgegate, although this is difficult to square with his description in the following sentence, of the appearance of sandbanks in the Dee.[114] In the event, the progress of silting, and other navigational changes, combined during the 13th century to

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[107] Morris, *Chester*, p. 300.
[108] *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 59, 1964, p. 35; cf. Cheshire R.O., Tithe award for Holy Trinity parish, Chester, Ref. EDT 93/2.
[109] For 'Eyam' *see* Irvine, 'Notes on the History of St. Mary's Nunnery', p. 104 (dated c. 1281); for 'Rodeghe' *see Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 47, 1952, p. 15 (dated 1340); Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, vol. 2, p. 548 (dated 1366).
[110] *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 59, 1964, p. 5; cf. *Notitia Cestrensis*, p. 104.
[111] Perhaps after 1448: Dodgson, 'Place-Names and Street-Names', pp. 36 f.; cf. Morris, *Chester*, pp. 164, 169.
[112] *V.C.H. Cheshire*, vol. 3, p. 174; Tait, *Chartulary*, vol. 1, p. 301 (dated before 1221).
[113] *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 55, 1960, p. 102 (dated c. 1217-27); *V.C.H. Cheshire*, vol. 3, p. 174.
[114] *Liber Luciani*, p. 46; cf. Mason, 'Chester: the Evolution and Adaptation of its Landscape', p. 20.

withdraw the bulk of shipping from this bend in the Dee to the estuary, where most heavy cargoes were being landed or transhipped by 1300.[115]

However, the antiquary, William Smith, viewing 'certain void places and corn-fields' here in about 1575, suggested that it had once all been densely populated by inhabitants, who had since moved out to the suburbs.[116] It is possible that Earls Hugh II and Ranulph III, who alone would have had the authority to extend the city defences, envisaged an influx of citizens into this sector, from which they and their circle might have profited by enhanced rents. We hear of a burgage plot next to St. Chad's, and a shop in Blackfriars Lane, which seems to indicate that this area now shared in burghal status;[117] but no widespread commercial or industrial activity followed in their wake, and there is no evidence that the area was ever densely populated. If the extension was even partly intended as an experiment in town planning, it was unsuccessful. The Grey and Black Friars, arriving in 1237 and 1241 respectively, found cheap but extensive sites within the defences still unfilled. Any hopes that they may have had of profiting from the alms of visitors passing through Watergate, were to be disappointed. These two orders ended at the Dissolution in great poverty, in contrast to the White Friars, who settled marginally closer to the city's commercial centre.[118] When the Dissolution swept all three Friaries and the Nunnery away, this Western strip reverted to a 'green corridor', and throughout its subsequent history up to the present day, it has been the scene of basically different land use patterns from the area within the old fortress/_burh_ walls and Lower Bridge Street. It has been 'the area of large-scale institutions and prestige housing developments', thanks to the persistence of large landownership divisions originating in the 12th and 13th centuries.[119]

While the old Roman/Saxon walls had laid down what M. R. G. Conzen has called a strong 'fixation line', the new Western walls moved away from, rather than towards, the centre of Chester's population gravity.[120] The thriving Foregate Street was excluded, while an unusually liberal amount of green space was included.[121] The walls impressed the monk, Ranulph Higden, with their solidity,

[115] K. P. Wilson, 'The Port of Chester in the Later Middle Ages', Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1966, vol. 1, pp. 149 f.; K. P. Wilson, _Chester Customs Accounts 1301-1566_, R.S.L.C., vol. 111, 1969, p. 19. For transhipment _see_ R. Stewart-Brown, ed., _Cheshire Chamberlains' Accounts 1301-1360_, R.S.L.C., vol. 59, 1910, pp. 26 (dated 1302-03), 93 (dated 1320), cited by Wilson, _Chester Customs Accounts_, pp. 20-21.
[116] Quoted in _Chester: Contemporary Descriptions_, p. 8.
[117] _Cheshire Sheaf_, 3rd series, vol. 58, 1963, pp. 86 f. (dated 1414); Tait, _Chartulary_, vol. 2, pp. 467 f. (dated 1278).
[118] _V.C.H. Cheshire_, vol. 3, pp. 171, 173, 174 ff.; cf. J. H. E. Bennett, 'The Grey Friars of Chester', _J.C.A.S._, new series, vol. 24, 1921, p. 16.
[119] T. J. Welsby, 'The Internal Structure of Retail Nucleations: the Case of Chester', unpublished dissertation, University of Leeds, 1971, p. 7.
[120] Conzen, 'Alnwick', p. 40.
[121] For other towns with large suburbs and less green space, _see_ Lobel and Tann, 'Gloucester', pp. 3, 8; J. Campbell, 'Norwich', in M. D. Lobel and W. H. Johns, eds., _Atlas of Historic Towns_, vol. 2, 1975, p. 11; W. Urry, _Canterbury under the Angevin Kings_, 1967, p. 181.

although they never had to face a siege in the Middle Ages.[122] They acted as useful toll stations, and probably acquired a secondary importance as a source of civic pride,[123] but their relevance as social demarkation lines was far less than the invisible boundaries of parishes which crossed them.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to unravel some of the stages of Chester's morphological development between the 10th and 13th centuries, and to relate them to the main cultural phases represented by Saxon, Scandinavian, and Norman settlers. This was a period in which Chester was open to an extraordinarily potent mixture of ethnic influences,[124] a diversity which was expressed socially and functionally in a variety of urban foci, enclaves, and 'urban villages'. The result was a complex pattern of settlement, accretion, and enclosure which the relative compactness of the site, and the simple geometry of its wall and street layout, should not be allowed to obscure.

[122] *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, Monachi Cestrensis,* ed. C. Babington, vol. 2, Rolls Series, 1869, p. 81; Morris, *Chester,* pp. 41 ff. (dated 1401), 120 (dated 1263).
[123] Morris, *Chester,* pp. 554 ff. (dated 1321); Turner, *Town Defences,* pp. 89-91.
[124] Cf. G. Unwin, *Studies in Economic History: Collected Papers . . . edited by R. H. Tawney,* 1927, reissued 1958, p. 59.