BIRMINGHAM BEFORE THE BULL RING

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Birmingham, it seems, has no doubt about its origins.[1] A small group of axe-wielding early Anglo-Saxons was led across the densely wooded Birmingham Plateau by a man named Beorma. They made a clearing on a site near to a ford across the minor river now known as the Rea, and the settlement which they founded there is still called 'the land-unit of Beorma's people'.[2] By the time of Domesday Book (1086), when Birmingham is first recorded in surviving written sources, a village stood on the site replete with manor-house, church and green; and it was here, 80 years later (1166), that Peter de Birmingham, a direct descendant of the place's first Norman lord, Richard, was allowed to establish a weekly market.[3] The distinctive outlines of the green on which it was held survived until 2000 as Birmingham's Bull Ring, and the village's church, St Martin-in-the-Bull-Ring, is still standing, if in an entirely rebuilt form.[4]

Notwithstanding the substantial damage inflicted on this model by the accumulated scholarship of the later twentieth century,[5] it persists undiminished. It is propagated on, for instance, a website specifically designed to assist Birmingham's school teachers to use the city's history in teaching the National Curriculum, and also on the City Council's official website.[6] And it has now been vigorously reinforced by Carl Chinn, Birmingham's Community Historian, in a book which is likely to be a standard source of popular information about Birmingham's origins for many years.[7]

The destruction of most of the Bull Ring and adjoining land in the major redevelopment of 2000-1 and the archaeological excavations and other fieldwork which accompanied it make it timely to look again at the question of Birmingham's origins. This can be done with the help of techniques and lines of enquiry which were not available when the well known model, outlined above, was devised. As a result of their use significant new light has begun to be thrown on the Anglo-Saxon history of the Birmingham area. For instance, the ecclesiastical parish of Birmingham has recently been shown to have been formed out of a far larger parish originally served, it seems, by the church of Harborne.[8] The latter may have been founded as early as the seventh century, at which time it has been argued that the southern part of the Birmingham Plateau was already well populated and agriculturally organised. Even though the Birmingham area was situated at the very margin of the kingdom of the

Mercians, it is very likely that it was already fully integrated into its administrative structures.[9] We are now also able to envisage the processes by which manors and parishes had been created there in the centuries before 1166. This means that we may confidently expect to gain a much better understanding of the circumstances in which the late medieval borough of Birmingham came into being, and of the local human landscape in which it was placed.

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In 1166 Henry II granted Peter de Birmingham and his heirs a market which was to be held 'at his castle of Birmingham'.[10] The market itself may have existed already, with the royal charter only serving to confirm it; but if so, the site at which it was held in 1166 is unlikely to have been a long established one. The human topography of the Bull Ring and its vicinity offers compelling evidence that Birmingham's late medieval and modern market-place was the product of a formal act of creation (Figure 1). Its triangular plan, the regularity of the plots set out along its sides, and the apparent re-alignment of the courses of one or more of the major roads which converge on it point to its having been deliberately laid out in a single operation.[11]

Peter himself may have been responsible for its creation, and it is very likely that the castle (*castrum*) to which Henry II's charter refers was situated where the moated manor-house of the Birmingham family stood until its destruction in the early nineteenth century. No archaeological evidence of twelfth-century or earlier occupation was found when the site was redeveloped in 1973-5; but little weight can be attached to the fact since investigation was largely confined to salvage recording.[12] However, an excavation done to the east of the market-place in 2000 recovered twelfth-century pottery from a ditch which probably formed the back boundary of the plots on its eastern side.[13] Moreover a few stones with allegedly twelfth-century decoration on them were found during the late nineteenth-century restoration of St Martin's church, which stands within the original market-place; but this is less reliable than the pottery as evidence of twelfth-century activity in the Bull Ring area.[14]

The royal charter said that the market was to be held at Peter de Birmingham's castle (*apud Castrum suum*), i.e. not actually within it but in its immediate vicinity. This is not uncommon: a market-place was often laid out on the most appropriate piece of ground beside a castle and was sometimes enclosed within an outer defensive ciruit. The castle itself was frequently on a site chosen for its strategic military significance, which was likely to be distant from the main settlement/s in the area concerned. Sometimes its existence was a brief one - to serve shortlived military needs in the early years of the Norman conquest, for example, or in the civil war of Stephen's reign - and it had no further impact on the local landscape. In many cases, however, its presence must have led to the abandonment of the pre-Norman manorial centre in favour of the newly fortified one.[15]

This seems likely to have happened in the manor of Birmingham. If the moated site existed in 1166, it was presumably an earthwork-and-timber castle

of the sort usually termed a ringwork - a simple round enclosure formed with a bank and ditch and usually having a strongly fortified entrance, within which stood a hall and lesser buildings. Castles of this type may have had a moat (i.e. a water-filled ditch) from the outset and were doubtless easily adapted for appropriate residential and manorial use once their initial military purpose had been fulfilled. (Where a motte had been thrown up, the late medieval and later manor-house often stood in the former bailey, which, as in the case of a ringwork, offered much more space.) Among the earliest of the many English moated manor-house sites, which are arguably the least well-defined type of medieval earthworks, there are many which probably originated as ringworks in or before the late eleventh century.

The moated site at Birmingham lay on low-lying, regularly flooded land at the edge of the manor,[16] a situation which makes sense only in terms of its being able to control a crossing-point of the River Rea used by several of the major long-distance roads of the southern end of the Birmingham Plateau (below, 8-11). The market-place, which lay close to the moated site, and probably St Martin's church too originated in the twelfth century. It is much more likely that their locations were determined by the prior existence of Birmingham's manor-house on the site which it occupied until the early nineteenth century than that the latter was built there and surrounded with a moat *after* the laying out of the market-place and the construction within it of the church. Therefore, even though there is no unambiguous archaeological evidence that the moated site existed before the fourteenth century,[17] the data from all sources, when combined, strongly suggest that it is the *castrum* of Henry II's charter of 1166. Its precise date of origin will never be known, but it was probably created in the late eleventh century, or perhaps the early twelfth, in circumstances necessitating close control of an important crossing of the Rea on the eastern boundary of the manor of Birmingham.

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If the moated manor-house site, the triangular market-place with the planned settlement along its sides, and probably St Martin's church were only recently established by 1166, we must look elsewhere for the nucleus of Anglo-Saxon Birmingham. The manor which Domesday Book records was seen by Richard Holt as an 'insignificant agricultural settlement' which had 'no sign of any distinguishing characteristics or any particular potential for growth'.[18] This is uncontroversial, but it does not mean that the late eleventh-century and earlier landscape of the manor of Birmingham was less developed than those of its neighbours.[19] It was no less likely than they were to have a manor-house, a church with a graveyard and, within the manor as a whole, a well established layout of settlements, roads and fields.

But what hope can we hold out of recovering reliable evidence of the whereabouts of any of these features? Certainly, archaeology has so far supplied almost no information; but this is not surprising in view of the repeated rebuilding of Birmingham's urban core over the last three or more

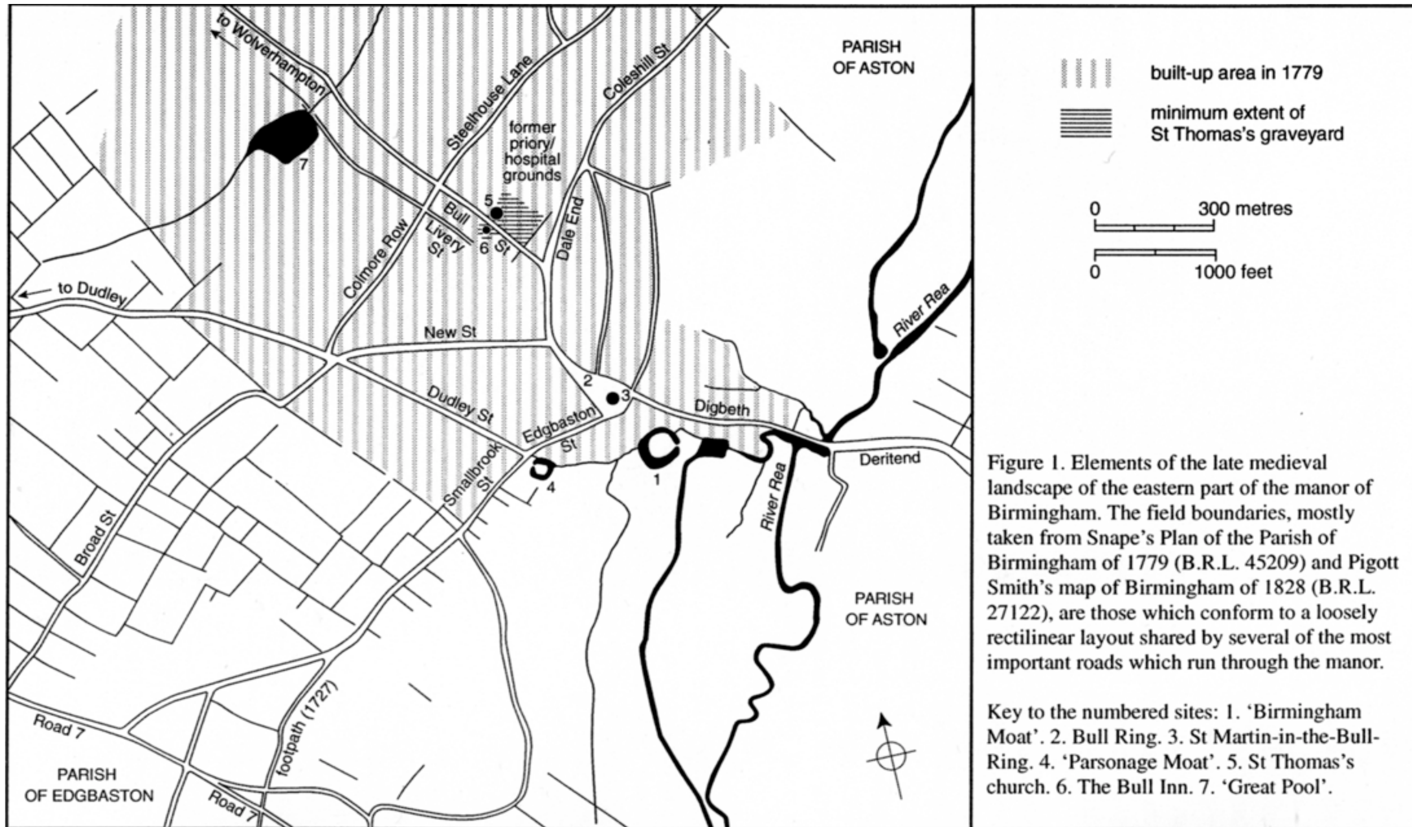

Figure 1. Elements of the late medieval landscape of the eastern part of the manor of Birmingham. The field boundaries, mostly taken from Snape's Plan of the Parish of Birmingham of 1779 (B.R.L. 45209) and Pigott Smith's map of Birmingham of 1828 (B.R.L. 27122), are those which conform to a loosely rectilinear layout shared by several of the most important roads which run through the manor.

Key to the numbered sites: 1. 'Birmingham Moat'. 2. Bull Ring. 3. St Martin-in-the-Bull-Ring. 4. 'Parsonage Moat'. 5. St Thomas's church. 6. The Bull Inn. 7. 'Great Pool'.

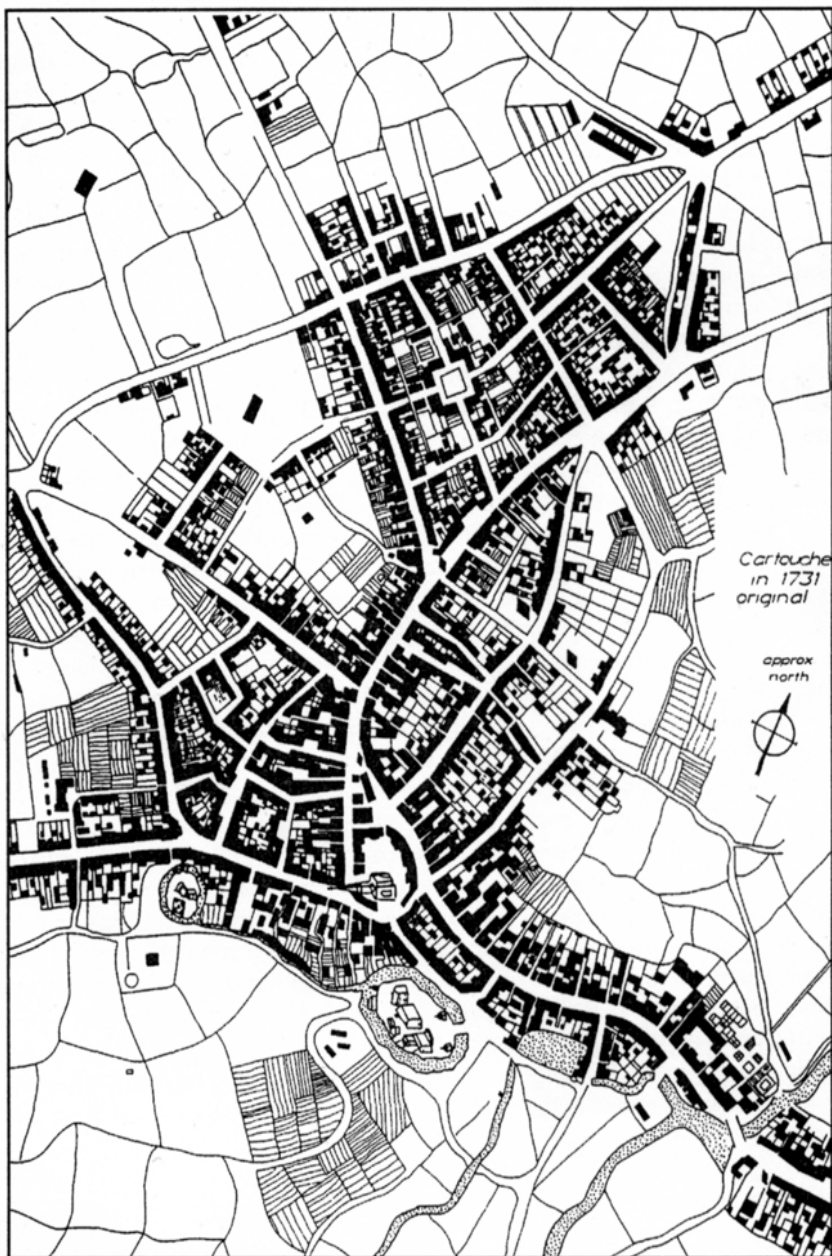

Figure 2. William Westley's map of Birmingham, 1731, as redrawn by Lorna Watts. Reproduced with her permission and with that of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society. The original map is illustrated as the cover plate.

centuries, coupled with, until the last decade, a tragic disregard for its physical heritage, both above and below ground. The excavations done in 1999-2000 prior to the Bull Ring's wholesale redevelopment revealed, even as the city's archaeological midnight approached, how much could still be learned about its early history when the municipal will existed. Future archaeological work elsewhere in the city centre (which covers almost the entire manor) may yet shed light on Birmingham's pre-twelfth-century history, but for the time being (and perhaps always) other sources must suffice.

These are of two sorts, neither of them plentiful or specific. The first is the human landscape - that is to say, the evidence of roads and major boundaries which is preserved in the many well drawn maps of the manor and town which exist from 1731 onwards (see plate on front cover; Figure 2).[20] They allow us to trace the evolution of Birmingham's landscape from a time when the town occupied only a relatively small part of the manor. Many of the latter's rural roads and even some of its field boundaries still survive in what is now an almost totally built-up environment, while others persisted for long enough in the nineteenth century to figure on early Ordnance Survey maps. As a result a reliable impression can be gained of the manor's rural topography near the beginning of the eighteenth century - one which, despite the many small-scale changes which must have occurred in the intervening centuries, is likely in its general outlines to bear a close resemblance to the topography of the Domesday manor (Figure 1). This is especially true of its eastern half, which was much more fertile and was therefore arguably more advanced in terms of its agriculture and had a far more fully developed human landscape.[21]

This cartographic study suggests shared alignments in the courses of some of the more important roads which crossed the manor and in those of many of the field boundaries. They ran approximately south-west to north-east and north-west to south-east. The identification of these predominant trends also allows us to measure the impact on the rural topography of the twelfth-century laying out of the market settlement[22] and its later piecemeal, partly planned, enlargement. This reveals significant road diversions and, in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the truncation of some of the roads which once ran uninterrupted across the area of the modern city centre, either parallel to the Rea or broadly at right-angles to it, or in other cases converging on the crossing-point at Digbeth (Figure 3). Useful as this undoubtedly is for analysing the evolution of Birmingham's urban landscape, it may also offer a clue to the whereabouts of the manorial centre of 1086 and before.

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The Roman road Ryknield Street ran on a south-west to north-east line through the middle of the manor. No agreement has been reached about its exact course. One view is that it ran well to the east of the fort at Metchley (Figure 3: C), probably passing near to the site of Edgbaston church and eventually being perpetuated in the line of Great Hampton Row and Wheeler Street (Figure 3: road 2). This view is based on assumptions which have been

made about the road's course between well known lengths of it to the south and north of the Birmingham area.[23] From a point just within the southernmost edge of the modern city it can be easily followed northwards as far as Stirchley, on the line of Lifford Lane and a long stretch of Pershore Road (Figure 3: road 1). To the north of Birmingham its *agger* survives in Sutton Park, and its course to the Park from a crossing of the Tame at Holford could apparently still be traced clearly on the ground in the eighteenth century.[24] These assumptions about the road's course have been based on projecting its line in Stirchley northwards to the Selly Park Recreation Ground (Figure 3: A), with a change of alignment occurring there which would take it through the heart of the manors of Edgbaston and Birmingham on a line picked up at length by Great Hampton Row.

However, intensive resistivity surveying in Selly Park Recreation Ground and on Elmdon Road Playing Fields (Figure 3: B) failed to locate the road,[25] nor is there any cartographic evidence of its course being perpetuated in the landscape of recent centuries.[26] Indeed, a map of the manor of Aston of 1758 shows neither a road nor even a field boundary on the line of Wheeler Street or parallel to it. This is not of course proof that Ryknield Street could not have followed such a route, but it significantly weakens the case which was based very largely on the line of Great Hampton Row and Wheeler Street.[27]

The other traditional view of Ryknield Street's course through the Birmingham area is that it ran into the Metchley fort (Figure 3: road 3) and continued across the rest of Edgbaston and the manor of Birmingham on a course which is now mirrored by the northern part of Metchley Lane and its former continuation through the grounds of the Birmingham Blue Coat School, and then by Harborne Road, Monument Road and Icknield Street (Figure 3: road 4).[28] By 1758 its putative course across the manor of Aston seems no longer to have survived as a road, but on a map of that date there is a continuous field boundary, about 320 m. long, on the projected line of Monument Road and Icknield Street which may mirror its line (Figure 3: G). If so, it may have crossed the Tame some distance to the west of the ford at Holford, or else may have changed its alignment so as to join the other road on the latter's approach to the ford.

An advantage of this second view of Ryknield Street's course is that it does not leave the Metchley fort isolated. There is reliable archaeological evidence of occupation in and around the fort until at least the late second century,[29] which counters earlier notions that it was only briefly in use during military campaigning in the west midlands in the mid first century AD. One might have expected the fort to be located further to the north, where, at the junction of Metchley Lane and Barlow's Lane, the ground rises to nearly 550 ft (168 m.). Instead it occupies a south-facing slope between the 450 ft (137 m.) and 500 ft (152 m.) contours. Here, however, it could dominate the junction of Ryknield Street and the Roman road from Gloucester via Worcester and Droitwich.

The latter's exact course from its crossing of the Lickey Hills on the south-western edge of the modern city is uncertain, but there is widespread agreement that it is broadly perpetuated by the line of Bristol Road South and Bristol

Road as far as the modern centre of Selly Oak (Figure 3: road 6).[30] Beyond there, Bristol Road maintains the same alignment for another half mile, but then adopts one which takes it away from its late medieval and early modern line towards Edgbaston church, and onto that of a new road built in the late eighteenth century.[31] The point at which the modern road changes its direction is exactly where it would have met Ryknield Street if, beyond Stirchley, the latter aimed directly at the fort. A junction of major roads of military origin only c.500 m. south of the fort would satisfactorily explain the latter's otherwise anomalous location, since from a site further north on the highest ground this road junction would have been invisible.

Despite recent investigations the conundrum of Ryknield Street's course through the Birmingham area remains unresolved. However, a new hypothesis can be offered - that *both* of its suggested courses through the manors of Edgbaston and Birmingham may have existed, the one serving the fort and the other by-passing it. If so, the failure of all efforts to find the road on Selly Park Recreation Ground and Elmdon Road Playing Fields, though worrying, is not fatal. It may not have crossed the low watershed between the valley of the Rea and that of its major tributary the Bourn, but instead have avoided the latter's steep southern slope by keeping to the upper western side of the Rea valley. Alternatively, it may have crossed one or both of the open areas on top of the watershed but not have been found by resistivity surveys because, for example, it lacked roadside ditches there.[32]

If two courses of the road existed between Stirchley and Holford, there were presumably ways of moving between them. One such way may have been on the line of Warstone Lane, which runs between Monument Road and the southern end of Great Hampton Row but not, it appears, beyond them (Figure 3: road 5). This road's name means 'hoar (i.e. ancient) stone',[33] which might conceivably indicate the survival thereabouts of a Roman milestone.

Another important early road met Ryknield Street at right-angles. Though it has never been recognised as such, almost certainly it too is of Roman origin, since much of the manor of Birmingham's southern boundary followed its line.[34] From south-east to north-west the road's line is mirrored in Warwick Road and, after a short break, Highgate Road, Belgrave Road, Sun Street West, Lee Bank Road, Islington Row, Ladywood Road and Reservoir Road (Figure 3: road 7a-c).[35] The last of these stops abruptly at the eastern edge of Rotton Park Reservoir but the manor boundary, reflected in Birmingham's ecclesiastical parish boundary, continues to the middle of the reservoir. Beyond it the road's line is lost in the modern landscape until, in Smethwick, it is picked up again by Church Road (Figure 3: road 7d), Manor Road and Victoria Road, heading as if towards the Roman fort at Greensforge (Staffs.).[36]

These roads - that is to say, the one or two courses of Ryknield Street and the evidently important through-route at right-angles to it - formed the main axes of the rural landscape of the eastern half of the manor of Birmingham. The western part seems not to have been intensively used for agriculture, even in the late medieval period.[37] Sarah Wager suggests that most of the manor's woodland was situated there and was probably continuous with Harborne's to the west.[38] Later on, much of the area was heath. It was in the

manor's eastern half that the arable fields and meadow were concentrated.[39] Early maps contain evidence of a loosely rectilinear layout of roads and fields there (Figure 1) which may once have been common to much of the better quality land to the west of the Rea in both Birmingham and the adjacent manors of Edgbaston and Aston.[40]

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Other roads too ran through the Birmingham area on the alignments of the putative Roman roads. By the eighteenth century, and presumably for many centuries before, the roads which ran on a generally north-west to south-east line crossed the Rea at Digbeth (Figure 3: E); consequently, as each one approached the river its course moved progressively further off the dominant alignment. One road came from the direction of Wolverhampton by way of West Bromwich and Handsworth (Figure 3: road 8). Within the modern city centre its line is followed by Great Hampton Street and by the original line of Constitution Hill and Old Snow Hill, later diverted to by-pass a large artificial pond (below, pp. 19-20), on a line now mirrored in part by Livery Street (Plate 1). It merged with Dale End at the northern end of High Street. The latter's course to the head of the market-place and then - as Corn Cheaping - along its eastern side briefly went away from the projected line of the Wolverhampton road; but Digbeth, which formed the continuation of Corn Cheaping to the Rea crossing, moved back progressively to the projected line as it approached the river. It is possible that, before the market-place (Figure 3: D) was created, the Wolverhampton road ran down the side of the Rea valley on a course slightly to the east of the market-place, and that, once the latter had been laid out on the best site, the road's first line from its junction with Dale End to the Rea crossing-point was abandoned and traffic was diverted onto a new road into and through the market-place.

Another road which largely conformed to the loosely rectilinear layout of Birmingham's medieval landscape came from the direction of Dudley (Figure 3: road 9). It ran through Smethwick on the line of its High Street, and within Birmingham itself was a continuous road - represented by the modern names Dudley Road, Spring Hill, Summer Hill Road, Sand Pits Parade, Summer Row, Pinfold Street and Dudley Street - as far as its junction with Edgbaston Street some 200 m. west of the market-place. However, its former line across the eastern half of the manor is now impossible to trace continuously on the ground because of the major disruption caused by nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments along its course, such as Paradise Circus and New Street Station. This road from Dudley was probably not so important as the other through-routes which crossed the Rea within the manor of Birmingham, and may not have been so old. At least once, for instance, it needed to make two right-angled turns, utilising the Harborne-Lichfield road for a short distance (i.e. the part of it which became Paradise Street). The turns were eventually removed by the creation of Summer Row. This suggests a road of only local significance which later was upgraded. Perhaps Dudley castle's importance from the late eleventh century as the centre of the Honor of Dudley, to which

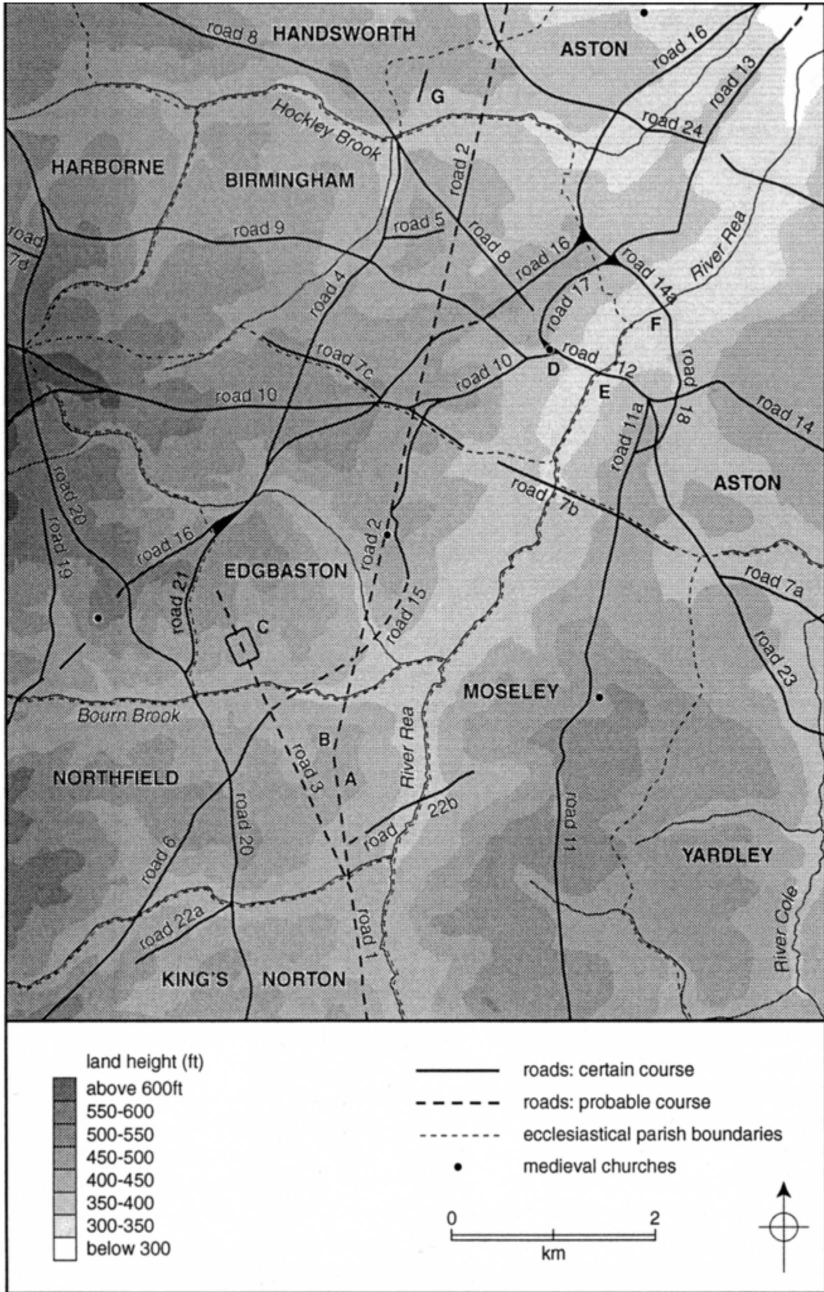

Figure 3. Important pre-modern roads in the manor of Birmingham and its vicinity, shown superimposed on the area's relief and drainage pattern. The probable courses of lost lengths of some Roman roads are also suggested. Roads 1-18 and the individually lettered sites are identified and discussed in the text; for roads 19-24 see note 54.

the manor of Birmingham belonged, enhanced the road's status.

Another road which crossed the Rea at Digbeth came from Halesowen and beyond (Figure 3: road 10). Some of its course across the eastern half of the manor of Birmingham was on a 'non-conformist' alignment, i.e. one markedly different from those of the roads and field boundaries discussed so far. It is represented in Birmingham's modern landscape by Hagley Road, a part of Islington Row, Bath Row, Holloway Head, Smallbrook Street and Edgbaston Street. For some of its course the road made use of lengths of other roads; elsewhere it cut across the grain of the local landscape. This gives it the appearance of a road which in terms of topographical stratigraphy is of relatively recent origin.

The crossing-point at Digbeth was not the only one in Birmingham's immediate vicinity. Plainly there was one a short distance upstream on the course of the north-west to south-east, probably Roman, road (road 7); and there was another beyond it where a local road from Edgbaston to Moseley met the river.[41] However, the other major crossing-point in the vicinity was some 800 m. downstream from Digbeth in the manor of Duddeston (in Aston's parish), on the line of Watery Lane (Figure 3: F).[42] This crossing and the one at Digbeth were in contemporary use, with each likely to be preferred by a certain sort of traffic or in certain weather conditions. To judge by the dominant alignment of the through-routes which used the pair of stone bridges between Digbeth and Deritend in and after the late medieval period, some of them may originally have crossed the river at Duddeston instead. For instance, the road from Alcester (Figure 3: road 11) is a probable prehistoric ridgeway - i.e. a long-distance road of pre-Roman origin which kept to high ground wherever possible and left it only to cross unavoidable rivers. Its users have always had to turn onto another road in order to reach the Digbeth ford (Figure 3: road 12), and in recent centuries have first been made to leave the original line of road 11 so as to by-pass a small estate named Ravenhurst (Figure 3: roads 18, 23).[43] The by-pass continued beyond road 23 (Stratford Road), eventually giving access to the Rea ford at Duddeston. However, road 11 may itself originally have run on directly to this ford. A short part of its original continuation is shown on Bradford's 1748 map of the Ravenhurst estate (Figure 3: road 11a); and beyond the Duddeston ford its line is accurately picked up and continued north-eastwards by the main road to Lichfield via Sutton Coldfield (Figure 3: road 13).

Similarly, by the eighteenth century the road from Coventry (Figure 3: road 14) turned acutely (as it still does) on its route through the eastern part of the manor of Bordesley in order to approach Deritend.[44] However, its alignment as it approaches this turn in Small Heath points directly at the Duddeston ford, and its line is picked up to either side of the Rea by Watery Lane, Belmont Row and Woodcock Street (Figure 3: road 14a). It too can therefore be presumed to have run originally to this crossing rather than to the one between Deritend and Digbeth.

Beyond the Rea ford, Watery Lane's continuation gave access to two south-west to north-east roads across the manor of Birmingham which connected the Birmingham area with Lichfield and Tamworth. The first of

these followed the line of the Roman road from Worcester and Droitwich (road 6) as far as a putative junction with road 3. Beyond this point the road's course no longer survives for almost 2 km., but it is reliably known to have run across what is now the sports field of King Edward's School, Edgbaston and along the southern edge of the adjoining Edgbaston golf course (Figure 3: road 15).[45] The northern half of Priory Road represents the continuation of its course, which ran on into the manor of Birmingham on the line of Wheelers Road and Wheelers Lane and merged with road 10. Beyond the market-place the road is now mirrored in High Street, Dale End, Coleshill Street, Prospect Row and Ashted Row (Figure 3: road 17). It merged with road 13 at the southern end of Bloomsbury Street.

Despite this route's importance in and after the medieval period, even the earliest maps show its line through the manor of Birmingham as a convoluted one, not at all like the gently sinuous courses of the area's other through-routes. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the premier road from Worcester to Lichfield lay on a different line across Birmingham, perhaps still using Ryknield Street for much of the medieval period. The disjointed, piecemeal through-route made up of, among others, roads 15 and 17 presumably reflects the strong attraction of the market settlement which had been founded near the eastern edge of the manor by 1166.

In marked contrast the other important south-west to north-east road across the area follows a much more smooth and topographically 'conformist' course across the manors of Harborne, Edgbaston and Birmingham and on towards Lichfield and Tamworth (Figure 3: road 16). Harborne was a valuable possession of the Church of Lichfield throughout the Middle Ages, being a member of the manor of Lichfield itself, and its church originally served Edgbaston and very probably Birmingham too.[46] A road linking Harborne to Lichfield was, then, an important one in the Birmingham area, where it is now represented by Vivian Road, part of Harborne High Street, Harborne Road, Broad Street, Colmore Row, Steelhouse Lane, Aston Street, Aston Road and Lichfield Road.[47]

In respect of the natural landscape this road could be considered one of the most important in the manor of Birmingham, where it runs down the middle of a narrow outcrop of Lower Keuper sandstone which stretches from Northfield to Sutton Coldfield. It is this ridge of sandstone across the eastern part of Birmingham (sandwiched between heavy, infertile glacial boulder clay to the west and Keuper Marl to the east), which produced the light, well drained soils on which the manor's arable farming was concentrated.[48] Here Bourn Brook and Hockley Brook - parallel, eastward-flowing tributaries of the Rea and Tame respectively - cut moderately steep-sided valleys, and it was along the watershed between them, which slopes down gently to the north-east, that the road from Harborne towards Lichfield ran. It entered the Rea valley itself in the parish of Aston and crossed the Tame at Salford *en route* to Sutton Coldfield.

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Many of the roads which have been described above followed smoothly sinuous courses across the Birmingham area, as is characteristic of early through-routes. It is impossible to say how old each one was, but there is no reason why they should not have existed in the Roman period. The field boundaries which shared the same alignments may also have belonged to a system created at the same time,[49] although many of those shown on the eighteenth-century maps of the area were probably created at a variety of later dates. Little survives in the twenty-first-century landscape of Birmingham to represent the boundaries' courses, since with only a few exceptions they were superseded, if not in the late eighteenth or nineteenth century, then much more recently, by large areas of industrial buildings or housing laid out on other alignments.[50] However, by using the many maps of different parts of Birmingham and adjacent manors which have been drawn at regular intervals it is possible to get an impression of the effect on Birmingham's landscape of the growth of the market settlement created by 1166. A proper morphological analysis, of the sort done by Nigel Baker for other historic towns in the west midlands but so far for only two areas in Birmingham,[51] will be needed before the history of its physical evolution can be reliably unravelled. However, a few preliminary observations are in order.

First, the laying out of the triangular market-place and of house plots along its sides introduced a major 'nonconformist' element to the landscape. Edgbaston Street and other lesser streets in the area to the west of the market-place, all of which are likely to be early in the history of the market settlement's growth, share common alignments. Second, the laying out of New Street, in existence by 1448,[52] created an important new alignment in the area to the west and north of the market-place - one to which the house plots and side streets conform on both sides of it. New Street makes an almost exactly right-angled junction with the short length of road, apparently newly laid out in the twelfth century, which brought all south-bound traffic to the head of the market-place.[53] On the latter's other side Moor Street and Park Street, and the properties and lesser roads beside them, are similarly aligned.

The chief components of Birmingham's late medieval townscape were still very largely intact when the first maps were published in and after the 1730s. As has been seen, the courses of the main through-routes can be traced across the manor with considerable precision in most cases. Many of them have continued in use to the present day, although their courses have been modified in lots of small ways so that the modern line is frequently no longer a direct reflection of the original one. Despite this it is clear that the twelfth-century foundation of the market settlement led to a significant distortion of the manor's earlier road pattern. If we had a map of Birmingham as it was at the time of Domesday Book (1086), it would undoubtedly depict most of the long-distance roads recorded on the maps of 1731 and 1750. However, the courses of many of them would, it seems, have been different in the area of the future market settlement. In some instances, such as the road from Wolverhampton, the difference would be only a small one, but in several others it is likely to have involved a substantial diversion from the original course so as to ensure that all traffic passed through the market-place. Some

Plate 1. *Part of Samuel Bradford's map of Birmingham, 1750, reproduced by permission of Birmingham Library Services. The priory/hospital of St Thomas lay to the north-east of Bull Street, in the area between Steelhouse Lane and Dale End. St. Thomas's church is believed to have lain close to Bull Street in the vicinity of Upper Minories.*

new roads may have been formed or existing ones have been significantly re-routed, such as the roads from Halesowen and Dudley. Of the more important roads coming from east of the Rea most originally aimed for a crossing above or below the one between Deritend and Digbeth; only the road from Stratford (according to the evidence of its course) may always have gone straight to the latter.

This imaginary map of 1086 would reveal, therefore, significantly different trends in the road pattern of the Birmingham area from the ones shown on eighteenth-century maps. Through-routes on a generally south-west to north-east course would be more prominent in the local landscape; and each of those aligned roughly north-west to south-east would be more directly associated with one particular crossing-point of the Rea. Consequently, the loosely rectilinear layout of roads and field boundaries which is evident on the eighteenth-century maps of eastern Birmingham, beyond the market settlement, would be seen to have extended formerly over this latter area too.

These deductions have important implications for the topography of the late eleventh-century manor, especially for the situation of the manorial nucleus. They suggest that, even though the Rea crossing at Digbeth was always significant, it was the foundation of the market settlement in its vicinity in the twelfth century, and perhaps also the construction of a bridge over the Rea at the same time, or a little earlier (below, p.24), which produced major changes in the courses of some of the area's through-routes and a diminution of the importance of others. Other evidence, examined already, indicates that in the late Anglo-Saxon period the lord's hall is most unlikely to have stood on or near the site of the Birmingham family's moated manor-house, which arguably was a late eleventh- or early twelfth-century innovation.[54]

* * *

Similarly, it is probable that the manor already had a church by 1086 but that it stood on a different site from the one which was eventually occupied by St Martin's. This is a deduction made from considering the second main source of evidence for Birmingham's pre-twelfth-century history referred to much earlier on (the first one being the human landscape). This comprises the evidence, slight as it is, for Birmingham's two medieval churches - St Martin's and St Thomas's - and for their graveyards.

There was undoubtedly a church standing in the market-place by the mid thirteenth century; and if a nineteenth-century report of the discovery, during the restoration of St Martin's, of several stones bearing twelfth-century decoration can be relied on, there had been one there since the twelfth century.[55] It used to be believed that St Martin's church predated the market-place, which developed around it organically until at length it was given formal status by the royal charter of 1166.[56] However, with the market settlement's origins having been recognised as being the result of an act of deliberate seigneurial foundation,[57] this view is now untenable. The triangular market-place and the house plots of uniform width which fronted its sides cannot have developed spontaneously; and it is most unlikely that they were

laid out around an existing church, least of all one which already had a graveyard.

Britain has many instances of a church standing in the middle of a planned market-place, but in none of them has it been shown that the church arrived first.[58] There are good reasons why this should be so. The creation of a market settlement (which in many cases became a borough from the outset) might well involve substantial alteration of the local landscape. The site, shape and size of the market-place all needed to be carefully considered so as to maximise the existing natural and other advantages available for concentrating commercial activity. The ideal site was doubtless one which was already crossed by one or more of the area's most important through-routes; but when that was not the case, the road in question was commonly moved so as to force all traffic to pass through the new market-place.[59] The more open and unimpeded the latter was, the better it would have been for setting up stalls and allowing ready access to them. Therefore, if St Martin's had already been standing on its present site when the market settlement was founded, and especially if it had a graveyard, the new plantation would have been put to the east or north of it, and the roads would have been diverted as necessary.

We can be confident that St Martin's church was not erected until the market-place had been laid out. The decision to locate it within the latter,[60] despite its inevitably forming a significant obstacle, is understandable. If there had been an existing church on the site, it would have been either the parish church of the manor with burial rights and therefore a graveyard, or conceivably a chapel attached to the ringwork (although the distance between them would have been surprisingly great), but in neither case a structure associated with the market or the merchants who used it. However, a new church built within the existing market-place would certainly have been founded to serve the inhabitants of the market settlement. In most contexts we could simply refer to such a church as a borough chapel, and that is what it became; but the plantation at Birmingham gained burghal status by a different, slower route than most others of the period.[61] The church, as a powerful symbol of the mercantile community's success and distinct corporate identity, would have been constructed on the most prominent site available in the settlement.

It would not have had a graveyard, nor would it have been expected to need one in the future. The people of Birmingham went on burying their dead where they had been doing so before. At first this had almost certainly been at Harborne;[62] but by the mid thirteenth century, when the first reliable evidence of St Martin's church occurs, and very probably by the late twelfth century (if St Martin's existed by then), Birmingham probably had a parish church and graveyard of its own, as did most other neighbouring manors.[63] But if they were not located in the Bull Ring, where were they? and why and how did St Martin's eventually become Birmingham's parish church and get burial rights?

The second of these questions is the easier one to answer, since the ecclesiastical situation at Birmingham is not a unique one. When a borough gained a chapel for itself, the mother church was usually able either to prevent

rights from passing to it which diminished its own or else to limit them strictly. Borough chapels which became parochially independent usually served no more than the area of the borough, and often did not get burial rights until recent centuries. However, in a few instances the chapel concerned was able, not only to wrest rights rapidly from its mother church, but actually to gain control of its parish and reduce the latter to the status of a mere chapel in what was henceforward its former daughter's parish. This can be shown to have happened at Chelmsford and Braintree (Essex) and Lichfield (Staffs), although to different extents.[64] These were all places where a market settlement, founded in the twelfth century, had its own chapel in or close to the market-place, and where the mother church lay some distance away. The reason for this reversal of roles is presumably that the borough's commercial success led to rapid growth in its size and importance, and that its chapel correspondingly increased in wealth and importance until the rural parish church had become so marginalised that its role was formally acknowledged to have passed to its former daughter.

At Chelmsford and Braintree the original church at length became redundant and disappeared; but at Lichfield, although St Michael's became subordinate to its former chapel, St Mary's (which stood in the market-place), it kept its parish and graveyard, and the dead of the borough went on being buried there. At Birmingham too the chapel stood in the market-place itself and therefore would have found that installing a graveyard large enough to cater for the whole manor was a serious inconvenience, if not impossible. Eventually it did do so, with results which are famously described by William Hutton,[65] but it is reasonable to suppose that for a long time most, perhaps all, of Birmingham's dead continued to be buried in the manor's original graveyard, with only the burgesses (or only the more important ones) being buried at St Martin's.[66]

So far this has been a wholly hypothetical discussion. No explicit evidence exists that St Martin's was not the original parish church of Birmingham, nor even that it was founded after the laying out of the market settlement rather than before it. The proposal being made here - that an earlier church with a graveyard stood elsewhere in the manor - has two bases. The first is our knowledge of what happened elsewhere in comparable situations: not a single example is known of a church which stood within the market-place of a planted borough or market settlement in Britain and which can be shown to have predated the plantation. The second basis is the circumstantial evidence from Birmingham itself, a significant part of which establishes that the market-place in which St Martin's stood had an origin of this sort.

* * *

There is other circumstantial evidence too, which has not yet been mentioned. It concerns the church of the poorly documented priory or hospital of St Thomas at Birmingham.[67] This stood on the north-east side of Bull (formerly Chapel) Street (Figure 1),[68] which was part of the through-route from Wolverhampton to the Rea crossing at Digbeth. By the time of its dissolution

(probably 1536),[69] it had accumulated a lot of land in Birmingham and adjacent manors; but very little is known about its origins, its organisation or its role in local life.

Though it is often referred to by modern writers as 'the priory or hospital' or merely as 'the hospital', it was a house of Augustinian canons which provided hospitality rather than an establishment which resembled a modern hospital. All religious houses were meant to care for travellers and the poor, but chiefly for their souls rather than their bodies.[70] Some houses, urban ones in particular, specialised in this activity, and for them the term *hospitium* is most appropriate; but by no means all of the latter were set up specifically to do so. Some of them were, and they may sometimes have been called 'priory' or 'hospital' interchangeably only because they were controlled by a prior; others were founded as conventional houses of religion which beside their other activities dispensed hospitality on a significant scale.[71]

As Clay concluded, 'It is in truth often difficult to discriminate between hospital and priory; sometimes they are indistinguishable in aim and scope.'[72] This is true of the house at Birmingham. Sources refer to it variously as a hospital, a house and a priory, but give so little information about its attributes that it cannot be reliably characterised. It was in existence in 1284x85, the date of the first known reference to it,[73] but its date of foundation is unknown. It may have been only recently set up then (as is usually assumed), but equally it could already have been over a century old. Sixteenth-century surveys reveal that the house owned a considerable amount of land in the manor of Birmingham, most of it lying adjacent to its precinct, and also elsewhere.[74] Almost the earliest record of its land holding is a pardon which the house was given in 1310 for having acquired in mortmain, but without a royal licence, very many small properties, of which a few were in adjoining manors but the great majority were located in Birmingham itself.[75] Presumably they had all been given since 1279 (the Statute of Mortmain); any earlier grants would have needed no pardon. Very little else is recorded of the house's acquisition of lands, except for what it was given in Birmingham and Aston in 1350 to endow a chantry in its church.[76]

The large block of land by which the house was surrounded at its dissolution is most unlikely to have been assembled exclusively from small gifts of the sort listed in the pardon of 1310.[77] It is of course possible that some of it was acquired in 1350 at the creation of the chantry, or else on another occasion after 1310 but with no record of the grant having survived (although that is unlikely). But most, perhaps all, of it was probably given prior to 1279, since by the early fourteenth century the house was evidently in decline. Despite an energetic episcopal visitation in 1344, its later history points to its church's increasing importance but a diminution in the provision of care for the poor and sick.[78] Donations, therefore, are likely to have declined - whether of land itself, or of alms (beyond what supplied the hospital's daily needs) with which to buy land.[79]

Most of the large area of land surrounding the house was therefore probably gained in the thirteenth century, or in the twelfth if the house existed then. Its size and compactness suggest that most of it was given in no more

than two or three substantial blocks and that it was almost certainly former demesne land of the Birminghams, who apparently founded the house. For instance, all known presentations to its wardenship, of which there were seventeen between 1361x69 and 1568, were by them or their tenants.[80] Other evidence includes a note made in 1529 that there was a free chapel in Birmingham, 'whereof the lord...is patron and founder'.[81] By the sixteenth century the demesne consisted of extensive areas of parkland, most of which was unsuitable for agriculture, but otherwise merely of some widely scattered pieces of pasture in the zone of former open field agriculture and some meadowland on either side of the Rea.[82] However, in 1086 there may have been much more demesne land. Though Domesday Book alleges that the manor's arable was underexploited, with only three of the six possible ploughs actually in use,[83] the proportion of one on the lord's land to two on the tenants' suggests a much larger area of arable land in demesne then than in the sixteenth century.

This brief discussion of the priory/hospital of St Thomas shows that it may have been in existence for a long time, perhaps for a century or more, when first recorded in 1284x85, that it was almost certainly founded by the Birminghams, and that its possessions included an extensive block of land surrounding its precinct which may formerly have been among the best land in the manorial lords' own hands. None of these suggestions can be proved, let alone advances our understanding of the history of Birmingham before the market settlement was created. By contrast, the house's church and its graveyard can tell us a lot.

* * *

The first reference to the church apparently occurs in an entry in the 1327 subsidy roll to 'the keeper of St Thomas's chapel' (*custode capelle Sancti Thom*'), who appears second in the list of those being taxed in Birmingham, immediately after William Birmingham, the lord of the manor.[84] The next reference to the church comes in 1350 when a chantry was founded in it; but very few are found thereafter until the early sixteenth century, when several sources call it a free chapel.[85] This description first appears in 1422 in records relating to an enquiry made 'into the vacancy and right of patronage of the hospital or free chapel of S. Thomas the martyr of Birmingham'.[86] From these few bare statements it would be easy to assume that the church was an insignificant chapel which had been set up specifically to serve the Augustinian house. (It apparently survived for a further ten years after the latter's dissolution, but only because of the chantry which it accommodated.[87]) However, what we know of the graveyard in which it stood shows that it was a church of considerable importance which must have existed before the priory/hospital was founded.

Its graveyard was evidently a large one. There is, inevitably, no contemporary evidence of its extent, but when the former precinct of the priory/hospital and the land adjoining it were developed for housing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, large numbers of human bones were

found.[88] From north-west to south-east the graveyard's minimum extent was from the south-eastern side of the Minories to a path running behind the properties on the north-western side of Dale End, and from south-west to north-east from land fronting the south-western side of Chapel Street (later Bull Street) to Lower Priory (Plate 1), a road which once ran between The Old Square and Dale End but which was lost when Priory Queensway was constructed. However, it may well have extended north-west of Upper Minories, since the church is believed to have lain beneath this road's south-eastern frontage,[89] and the graveyard probably surrounded it rather than adjoined it on only three of its sides.

The graveyard appears to have been large not only in its extent but also in the number of burials which it contained. The continuator of William Hutton's *History of Birmingham* records that in 1786 'many bushels of bones were dug up' in premises on the south-eastern side of Upper Minories; and 'numerous skeletons' were also found in 1883-84 when Corporation Street was laid out over land to the south-east of the 1786 discoveries.[90]

But by far the most significant archaeological information is that part of the graveyard lay to the south-west of Chapel/Bull Street. It is worth quoting in full the report made by William Hutton:[91]

> The church is supposed to have stood upon the spot [which is] now No. 27, in Bull Street. In the premises[92] belonging to the Red Bull, No. 83, nearly opposite, have been discovered human bones, which has caused some to suppose it the place of interment for the religious, belonging to the priory, which I rather doubt.

Dugdale states that there was an inn called the Bull across the road from the priory/hospital.[93] It is, however, unclear if its garden lay beside the inn along the roadside or if it was at its rear, i.e. south-west of it.[94] There can be no doubt that these bones show that burials were once made to either side of the road, which Dugdale confirms as the main one from Wolverhampton.[95] The people mentioned by Hutton who supposed that the area around the inn was 'the place of interment for the religious, belonging to the priory' evidently presumed that, because it was on the opposite side of the road to the priory/ hospital, it was likely to be a separate graveyard. They deduced, therefore, that it must be where the canons were buried, with the main graveyard - which allegedly contained at least one female burial[96] - having been for lay people. Hutton said that he doubted the explanation but annoyingly neglected to explain why.

Perhaps he knew that the canons' graveyard, while no doubt being a separate one, would have adjoined the church. Perhaps it occurred to him too that the road might not always have had the course which it followed in his own day - that is to say, that all the burials to the south-west of Chapel/Bull Street might have been ones made in an as yet undivided graveyard. For this is the only explanation of their situation which rings true. It is also corroborated by the evidence of the road itself as it is shown on the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ordnance Survey maps. For the final 1.2 km. of its course to its junction with Dale End the road gives every appearance of having been deflected from an older, much straighter line further to the south-

west. The probable earlier line is mirrored by Livery Street, a road which, if it existed in 1731 (as it certainly did by 1750), was no more than a field track by then. Its deflection to the north-east is perpetuated by the line of Constitution Hill, Old Snow Hill and Chapel/Bull Street (Plate 1).

The reason for the deflection is not hard to find. It has nothing to do with the building of Snow Hill railway station, opened in 1852,[97] for the various well drawn eighteenth-century maps of the area show the road already on its later line. Its cause is a substantial north-eastward flowing tributary of Hockley Brook which the road had to cross 600 m. north-west of the site of St Thomas's church. Alternatively, the road may have moved to its new line, not so as to cross the stream itself, but to avoid a fish-pond which had been made, as it seems, with its dam apparently along the former course of the road. Known as *Phillippe's Pole* in 1553 and the Great Pool on eighteenth-century maps, it was evidently a large, deep one.[98]

Whichever of these alternative explanations is the correct one, it is clear from a study of the natural topography and early maps that the road was deflected to the line which it took in recent centuries from one further to the south-west. This is so even in the vicinity of the priory/hospital. Bradley's splendid map of 1750 shows Livery Street ending at its junction with Colmore Row; but there are clear clues in the property boundaries and an alleyway in the area between Colmore Row and High Street (which the map calls High Town) that it once continued through to the latter.[99] Such a continuation would have taken it along the rear boundary of properties fronting onto the south-west side of Chapel/Bull Street and have aimed directly for the Rea crossing at Digbeth. It would have formed the original south-western limit of the graveyard around St Thomas's church.

We have no way of knowing when the graveyard originated, for how long burials were made in the area to the west of the church, or when the road from Wolverhampton was deflected onto its new course across it. It appears that the (Red) Bull Inn, known then as the Bull Tavern, existed before the dissolution of the priory/hospital and the chantry in St Thomas's church in 1536 and 1546 or 1547 respectively, and that part of the rest of the land on the south-west side of the road was also in hands other than the canons' own.[100] Their precinct evidently lay wholly north-east of the road on its deflected course, and it is very hard indeed to conceive of its ever having extended further to the south-west. If the Wolverhampton road had needed to be deflected while the priory/hospital existed (whether so as to avoid the newly made fish-pond or merely to cross the stream at a better place), it would have been easy for it to skirt a precinct which included the whole of the graveyard around St Thomas's. We may reasonably conclude, then, that the road adopted its modern course before the Augustinian house's foundation, and that the graveyard was already a long established one before the road was deflected.

If this line of argument is sound, it makes it very likely that St Thomas's, far from having been founded to serve the priory/hospital, was an existing church of some antiquity in which Augustinian canons were placed by the lords of the manor in the twelfth or thirteenth century.[101] This would evidently be the mother church of Birmingham, on which St Martin-in-the-Bull-Ring had

at first been dependent. Its possession of a graveyard which was probably already old and large in the thirteenth century, or perhaps even in the twelfth, may mean that it was a church of the sort which is variously referred to as a sub-minster, a lesser minster or a parochial chapel.[102] However, it is conceivable that it was no more than a manorial chapel of early foundation which had burial rights from the outset.

* * *

The churches of a small number of medieval hospitals elsewhere in England are known to have had parochial status, but few of them have left fuller information about their origins than has St Thomas's. In most cases we have little or no reliable indication of the date and context of the hospital's foundation, and none about those of its church. As at Birmingham, the clues are usually only circumstantial ones.

Several of these hospitals were probably founded in a church which was not wholly free of its mother's control. For instance, William I by tradition founded St Leonard's leper hospital at Northampton and gave it to the town. Its church allegedly had parochial rights over everybody who lived in its district or liberty - referred to as the parish of St Leonard without Northampton in 1295 - 'from the time of its foundation'.[103] In 1281 it claimed to have had the rights of burial and baptism 'from time beyond memory' and thus successfully resisted the efforts of the rector of Hardingstone to take its offerings and tithes; in return, however, the latter's consent was needed whenever the mayor and burgesses presented a new chaplain to St Leonard's.[104] In this case, then, the church can be reliably identified as an already existing one in which a hospital was founded, perhaps by an act of royal charity in the late eleventh century.[105] But, as at Birmingham, the church survived the hospital's dissolution by only a few years. The hospital of St Giles-in-the-Fields (Middlesex) is likely to have had a similar origin. It was founded in the early twelfth century by Henry I's wife Matilda in, it appears, a royal chapel in what was, or had been, the parish of St Margaret's, Westminster. In its latest medieval build the church was divided along its full length into a hospital chapel (to the south) and a public church, with the latter having a parish which it still serves today.[106]

Other hospitals were established in existing churches of unknown status which stood within or just outside a town. For instance, the hospital of St Giles at Norwich was founded in 1245x46 by bishop Walter de Suffield in what was almost certainly an existing church, St Helen's, located immediately adjacent to the cathedral precinct. It had the right of burial and earned substantial spiritualities.[107] Other similar examples are St Paul's at Norwich, St Nicholas's at York, St Mary Magdalene at Durham, and Holy Innocents at Lincoln,[108] all of which, to judge from the flimsy evidence available, possessed a church with parochial status.

Occasionally, a hospital church with quasi-parochial status by the end of the Middle Ages may have been newly built for the hospital but gained a second role later on owing to local circumstances. For example, St Nicholas's

hospital at Yarm (Yorks.) was probably founded in the 1220s. It was not Yarm's parish church, but was reported as being used as a chapel-of-ease in 1548 since the parish church was a mile away.[109] There was a (probably short-lived) borough at Yarm in the thirteenth century,[110] and St Nicholas's may have become associated with its inhabitants, either through the hospital's continuing role or by the creation of a chantry. St John's hospital at Armston (Northants.) was founded in 1232 with the consent of the patron and parson of the parish church at Polebrook. It had a graveyard which was originally only for the use of lay brothers and inmates, with all of its offerings going to Polebrook. Yet a papal mandate of 1401 refers incidentally to 'the hospital with cure of St John, Armston'.[111] This is a different situation from the one at Yarm. Armston was manorially separate from Polebrook - it and neighbouring Kingsthorpe were jointly assessed at five hides in 1086[112] - and it is therefore likely to have had a manorial chapel by the thirteenth century. Polebrook, however, was evidently a powerful church which protected its interests fiercely: even if the reference to 'with cure' means that St John's, Armston eventually had pastoral responsibilities, they were small-scale and certainly short-lived.

St Thomas's at Birmingham has features in common with several of these other churches, in particular its possession of a graveyard in which people not directly associated with the priory/hospital may have been buried. This is the clear implication of the report made in 1546 by the royal commissioners sent to Birmingham to inspect its gilds and chantries. They commented that because the town had a very large population, St Martin's, its only parish church, was unable to cope. For instance, even with all three priests of the Holy Cross gild and 'dyvers other[s]' involved, there were not enough priests available to administer the sacraments and sacramentals at Easter. Among these 'dyvers other' priests at least one must have been from St Thomas's, since the commissioners also noted that when there was plague in the town a great many people went to it for divine service.[113]

They also reported that Birmingham contained many poor people whom the gild 'found, aided and succoured...as in money, bread, drink [and] coals' and, if need be, 'buried very honestly at the costs and charges of the same Gild with dirge and mass.'[114] In so doing the gild had evidently taken over the charitable role which St Thomas's priory/hospital had been fulfilling before its decline, the result of which was probably that the latter's income was being used, as at many similar houses, for little more than the upkeep of its clergy.[115] However, given the small size of St Martin's graveyard it is likely that the poor people whom the Holy Cross gild buried were put, not there, but in St Thomas's graveyard. The latter still existed in 1553, even if it was no longer in active use, for it was referred to in a survey of the manor drawn up in that year.[116]

The well off, however, could expect burial at St Martin's. We have the wills of seven inhabitants of the manor of Birmingham who died before 1547, the probable date of closure of St Thomas's church and presumably of its graveyard too. These belong to the period 1522-39. Three of the testators ask to be buried inside St Martin's church itself and a fourth one within the porch.[117] The other three request burial 'in the churchyard of St Martin'.[118] The next

11 surviving wills date from 1551 onwards (to 1563),[119] by when we may reasonably assume that St Thomas's had been suppressed. Seven of the testators concerned ask to be buried inside St Martin's church.[120] However, an eighth one does not specify his place of interment (which must mean that he expected to be buried out-of-doors), and the other three stipulate burial 'in the churchyard of Birmingham'.

A total of six wills in which burial in St Martin's churchyard is requested, together with another one in which it is assumed, is too small for statistical purposes. But it is nonetheless interesting to see that the three predating 1547 spoke of burial 'in the churchyard of St Martin', whereas the ones which postdate it merely stipulated 'the churchyard of Birmingham' or, in one case, neglected to specify a place of burial. If this difference is significant, it presumably relates to the closure of St Thomas's graveyard. Before 1547 (if that is the key date) one needed to name St Martin's as one's anticipated place of burial, because many Birmingham people were being interred at St Thomas's; but thereafter there was no longer any need to do so because the town had only one graveyard.

In sum, if there was only the evidence of written sources to throw light on St Thomas's origins, we could not securely conclude that it was a church which must have existed before the foundation of the priory/hospital which it served. However, the physical evidence showing that its graveyard was significantly older than the priory/hospital allows us to reach this conclusion with confidence. If we had the register of a bishop of Coventry and Lichfield prior to Roger Northburgh (1321-58), or if any of the priory/hospital's own records had survived, something specific might well be known about the original status of both St Thomas's and St Martin's and/or their relationship to one another. As it is, the argument that St Thomas's was Birmingham's mother church, that St Martin's was founded in or after the late twelfth century as a chapel dependent on it, and that St Thomas's graveyard stayed in use until the mid sixteenth century needs to be based almost entirely on circumstantial evidence. It is, nonetheless, a strong argument.

* * *

This discussion of the medieval landscape of the manor of Birmingham and, second, of St Thomas's church and its graveyard has thrown new light on the issues highlighted at the start of this paper. It is clear that the Bull Ring, far from perpetuating an ancient village green, was a market-place which had only recently been created in 1166. It has also been argued that the Anglo-Saxon manor-house was not on the site of its moated successor and that St Martin-in-the-Bull-Ring was almost certainly not Birmingham's first church. The popular explanation of Birmingham's origins as a town is, it seems, unsustainable and should now be universally discarded.

Nor can the Birmingham area any longer be reliably visualised as being thickly wooded in the fifth and sixth centuries. Undoubtedly there was a lot of woodland then, but it lay interspersed with large areas characterised by an orderly layout of fields, local roads and settlements which had continued in

use from the late Roman period.[121] Whoever Beorma and his followers may have been,[122] they were plainly not the intrepid penetrators of thick, primeval forest who stand centre-stage, with good German axes at the ready, in Birmingham's origin myth. This element too of the traditional model should now be discarded for ever.

It has also been shown that before the market settlement was laid out, the Rea ford at Digbeth was not yet as important as it became in later centuries. The main long-distance roads running across the manor originally emphasised the significance of the crest of the sandstone ridge, rather than (as they eventually did) the planned market-place. The most important one was arguably the road leading from Harborne towards Lichfield and Tamworth, which within the manor of Birmingham ran along the crest and formed one of the main axes of the manor's arable landscape (the other one being the major road from Wolverhampton). These two roads' junction not far from where St Philip's cathedral now stands could reasonably be said to have been the nodal point of the manorial landscape. However, nothing has been found to suggest where the Anglo-Saxon manor-house was situated. The fact that St Thomas's church and graveyard occupied one of the quadrants formed by the road junction in question need not mean that the earlier manorial nucleus also lay thereabouts. If St Thomas's originated as a manorial chapel, it would certainly have been built close to its founder's hall; but it is much likelier to have been a parochial chapel - that is to say, a church founded from the local old minster (which was probably at Harborne[123]), or by the bishop. If so, its site was doubtless determined by factors other than the manorial lord's convenience - ones such as the prominence and ease of access which came from standing close to a major road junction. We should accept, therefore, that the site of Birmingham's Anglo-Saxon manor-house will very probably never be known.[124]

The decision to relocate it close to the ford at Digbeth may not have been made on solely military grounds. Given the importance of the Wolverhampton to Warwick road the construction of a castle there is easily understood. It presumably served a local as well as a regional purpose, for it was well positioned to keep an eye on the south-eastern manors belonging to the large group which William son of Ansculf held in the Birmingham area in 1086.[125] Therefore, even though its origins cannot be dated, the ringwork is much likelier to belong to the late eleventh century than the twelfth. Its permanent use as the manorial centre of Birmingham may, however, have arisen mainly from perceptions of the economic potential of a market-place laid out on the sloping ground in its vicinity and immediately above the ford. With a bridge built across the Rea (if none yet existed), and as many through-routes as possible being made to use the Digbeth crossing,[126] it was very likely that a market settlement set up there would flourish. The fact that it conspicuously did owes a great deal to the foresight and energy of its creator, whoever he was. Peter de Birmingham gained the market charter and is therefore the likeliest candidate; however, it might have been his assumed ancestor, Richard (who had the manor in 1086), or an intermediate holder who took the decision to lay out the market settlement and, arguably, initiated the manipulation of the road pattern in its vicinity.[127]

Despite the advances allowed by the new techniques and lines of enquiry exemplified here, we shall almost certainly never have more than the haziest notion of the appearance of the landscape of the manor of Birmingham in and before 1086. Its settlement pattern was probably dispersed (the characteristic form in north Warwickshire and adjacent areas then), but we know nothing about it. Nor should we expect to learn anything new about St Thomas's church or its graveyard - unless there has been a truly remarkable preservation of archaeological deposits in areas of the city in which several phases of major redevelopment during the last century and a half are likely to have destroyed all traces of them.

However, skilled morphological analysis could undoubtedly further unravel the main stages in Birmingham's physical evolution from the time of the laying out of the market settlement onwards, a study apparently still not attempted anywhere except in the immediate vicinity of the market-place.[128] For when landscape evidence of this sort is combined with a new look at the albeit sparse information in late medieval written sources and the minute amount supplied by archaeology, it is possible (as this paper has argued) to find out a lot more about the early history of Birmingham - and even about its history in the centuries before the Bull Ring's creation sparked off the place's meteoric urban development.

NOTES

[1] I am most grateful to Richard Holt and Sarah Wager, who read a draft of this paper and whose advice helped me to improve it in many ways, and to Philippa Bassett, Robert Bearman, Christopher Dyer, Michael Hodder, Catherine Mould, Jens Röhrkasten, Robert Swanson and Lorna Watts, who helped me with specific aspects of it.

[2] E.g. C. Gill, *A Short History of Birmingham from its Origin to the Present Day* (Birmingham, 1938), 10; *idem*, *History of Birmingham. Volume 1: Manor and Borough to 1865* (London, 1952), 4-5; *V.C.H. Warwicks.*, VII (1964), 4; G.E. Cherry, *Birmingham. A Study in Geography, History and Planning* (Chichester, 1994), 14; V. Skipp, *A History of Greater Birmingham down to 1830*, (Studley, 1980), 14.

[3] *V.C.H. Warwicks.*, VII, 5; Gill, *Short History*, 9; Skipp, *Greater Birmingham*, 25. C.f. C. Upton, *A History of Birmingham* (Chichester, 1993), 4: 'The idea of an Anglo-Saxon village around the Bull Ring, complete with church and green...is probably erroneous.'

[4] E.g. Cherry, *Birmingham*, 15.

[5] Most notably, M. Gelling, 'Some notes on the place-names of Birmingham and the surrounding district', *Trans of the Birmingham Arch. Soc.*, LXXII (1954), 14-17; *eadem*, 'Some notes on Warwickshire place-names', *ibid.*, LXXXVI (1974), 59-79; L. Watts, 'Birmingham Moat: its history, topography and destruction', *Trans of the Birmingham & Warwicks. Arch. Soc,* LXXXIX (1980), 1-77; R. Holt, *The Early History of the Town of Birmingham 1166 to 1600* (Dugdale Soc. Occas. Papers, XXX, 1985); S.J. Wager, *Woods, Wolds and Groves. The Woodland of Medieval Warwickshire* (British Arch. Reports, British Ser. 269, 1998).

[6] W. Dargue, 'History of Birmingham on your doorstep': www.bgfl.org/bgfl/activities/intranet/teacher/history/birmingham/index.htm, pp.70-1, 105. Birmingham City Council: www.birmingham.gov.uk/epislive/citywide.nsf/(Exlinks)/Origins, where there is a page entitled 'The Origins of Birmingham', which begins, 'In the Saxon 6th Century Birmingham was just one small settlement in thick forest.'

[7] C. Chinn, *One Thousand Years of Brum* (Birmingham, 1999), 13-14, 28.

[8] S. Bassett, 'Anglo-Saxon Birmingham', *Midland History*, XXV (2000), 1-27, at 17-19.

[9] Gelling, 'Warwickshire place-names', 66-8; Bassett, 'Anglo-Saxon Birmingham', *passim*; *idem*, 'How the west was won: the Anglo-Saxon takeover of the west midlands', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, XI (2000), 107-18, at 107-11.

[10] J.C. Davies (ed.), *Cartae Antiquae Rolls 11-20*, Pipe Roll Soc., new ser., XXXIII (1960), 190-1 (no. 613). The charter's date is said to be 1156 in some modern secondary sources, but 1166 is certainly correct.

[11] N.J. Baker, 'A town-plan analysis of the Digbeth ERA and Cheapside IA', in S. Litherland and C. Mould (eds), *An Archaeological Assessment of the Digbeth Regeneration Area and Cheapside Industrial Area* (Birmingham Univ. Field Arch. Unit, Report No. 337, 1995), 10-14.

[12] Watts, 'Birmingham Moat', 34. The moated site is shown on Westley's 1731 map of Birmingham, reproduced here on the front cover and, redrawn, as Fig. 2.

[13] Catherine Mould, pers. comm. Carl Chinn alleged that tenth-century pottery had been found in the vicinity of the Bull Ring (*One Thousand Years*, 28), but now informs me (pers. comm.) that he had probably been misled by rumours, current early in 1999 but later rebutted, that some sherds of pre-Conquest pottery had been found in a pit during Catherine Mould's excavations on a site on the south side of Edgbaston Street.

[14] J.R. Holliday, 'Notes on St Martin's church and the discoveries made during its restoration', *Trans of the Birmingham Arch. Soc.*, vol. for 1873 (1874), 43-73, at 50. Holliday manifestly intended to publish a line drawing of these stones: 'One was part of the jamb of a doorway, and the two others were portions of a small arch, probably the head of the same doorway. The date of these is fixed by the character of the chevron ornament upon it (see illustration). Elsewhere were found what appeared to be part of the jamb of a small plain Norman window and another carved stone of early character.' (*ibid*). But no such illustration was published in his paper or subsequently, and it appears that neither the stones themselves nor an illustration of them have survived. Although Holliday's identification of them is confidently made and is corroborated by the alleged occurrence of chevron decoration, without independent support we cannot accept these stones as incontestable evidence of a twelfth-century church.

[15] M.W. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages* (London, 1967), 125-9, 334-5; L. Butler, 'The evolution of towns: planted towns after 1066', in M.W. Barley (ed.), *The Plans and Topography of Medieval Towns in England and Wales* (Council for Brit. Arch., Research Report 14, 1975), 32-48.

[16] B. Walker, 'Notes on the Rea valley', *Trans of the Birmingham Arch. Soc.*, LII (1927), 231-9, at 231-3.

[17] Watts, 'Birmingham Moat', 40, 44, 54, 62.

[18] A. Farley (ed.), *Domesday Book seu Liber Censualis Willelmi Primi Regis Angliae*, 2 vols (London, 1783), fo. 243a (for an English translation: J. Plaister (ed.), *Domesday Book 23: Warwickshire* (Chichester, 1976), 27,5); Holt, *Birmingham*, 3.

[19] The manor's extent was tiny in comparison with the modern city, corresponding to only its very heart. The ecclesiastical parish of St Martin-in-the-Bull-Ring mirrored the manor exactly (Figure 3), prior to the creation of St Philip's parish in 1715.

[20] Maps of Birmingham: Westley's of 1731 (Birmingham Reference Library [hereafter B.R.L.] 73382); Bradford's of 1750 (B.R.L. 14002); Hanson's of 1778 (B.R.L. 14004); Snape's of 1779 (B.R.L. 45209); and Pigott Smith's of 1828 (B.R.L. 27122). Maps of adjacent areas: Deeley's of Edgbaston of 1701, reproduced in P.B. Chatwin, *A History of Edgbaston* (Birmingham, 1914); Sparry's of Edgbaston of 1718 (B.R.L. 373483); Bradford's of Ravenhurst, Camp Hill of 1748 (B.R.L. 379050); Tomlinson's of the manor of Aston of 1758 (B.R.L. 371055), the manors of Duddeston and Nechells of 1758 (B.R.L. 277740), and the manor of Bordesley of 1760 (B.R.L. 371058); and Sherriff's of Harborne of 1790 (B.R.L. 282533). Also Ordnance Survey Six-Inch Survey, First Edition: Warwicks. sheets (which also include immediately adjacent areas of Staffs. and Worcs.): 7SE (1889), 8SW (1889), 13NE (1889), 13SE (1890), 14NW (1889), 14SW (1889), 19NW (1883); Worcs. sheet 10NE (1887). (The area covered by these sheets was surveyed between 1882 and 1888.)

[21] This methodology has been used systematically since the 1970s and has allowed major advances to be made in our understanding of the physical appearance of the Anglo-Saxon landscape and, in particular, of the extent to which its fabric was of Roman or earlier origin. For discussion of principles and practice: T. Williamson, 'Early co-axial field systems on the East Anglian boulder clays', *Proc. Prehistoric Soc.*, LIII (1987), 419-31; *idem*, "The Scole-Dickleburgh field system revisited', *Landscape History*, XX (1998), 19-28; Bassett, 'How the west was won', 109-10.

[22] I shall use the term 'market settlement' throughout the paper, rather than 'borough' or 'market town', for two reasons. First, those living around the new market-place at Birmingham were, it seems, not formally granted burghal status at the outset but acquired it by individual negotiation (Holt, *Birmingham*, 4 & n. 17). Second, although many plantations very rapidly became urban, a town cannot be created, i.e. brought into being at one moment in time by an act of creation. Only the pre-conditions can be created; urbanism itself evolves - or not, as the case may be.

[23] F. Haverfield, 'Romano-British remains', *V.C.H. Warwicks.*, I (London, 1904), 223-49, at 240-1; C. Cadbury, 'The Roman roads of south Birmingham', *Trans of the Birmingham Arch. Soc.*, XLVI (1920), 22-35, at 34-5; J. St Joseph and F.W. Shotton, 'The Roman camps at Metchley, Birmingham', *ibid.*, LVIII (1937), 68-83, at 78; B. Walker, 'The Ryknield Street in the neighbourhood of Birmingham', *ibid.*, LX (1940), 42-55, at 52; I.D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, rev. edn (London, 1967), 285.

[24] W. Hutton, *An History of Birmingham to the End of the Year 1780*, 2nd edn (Birmingham, 1783), 142, 145.

[25] P. Leather, 'The Birmingham Roman roads project', *West Midlands Arch.*, XXXVII (1994), 8-11; *idem*, 'Birmingham, Selly Park Recreation Ground', *ibid.*, XXXIX (1996), 100-1; *idem*, 'Birmingham, Selly Park Recreation Ground and Elmdon Road Playing Fields', *ibid.*, XL (1997), 104-5. The sites are centred on SP 05258240 and SP 05258270 respectively.

[26] A. Baker and P. Leather, 'Birmingham, Selly Park Recreation Ground', *West Midlands Arch.*, XLI (1998), 107-8.

[27] It is possible that only Great Hampton Row (which lies entirely in the area of the manor of Birmingham) mirrors its line, and that Wheeler Street, which has a slightly different alignment, is wholly modern.

[28] Hutton, *An History of Birmingham*, 142; H.S. Pearson, 'The old roads to Birmingham', *Trans of the Birmingham Arch. Soc.*, XVI (1890), 30-40, at 34-5.

[29] A. Jones, *West Car Park, University of Birmingham. A Desk-Top Study 1995* (Birmimgham Univ. Field Arch. Unit, Report No. 384, 1995), and pers. comm.

[30] Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain,* 287; P. Leather, 'Lickey Hills, Rose Hill', *West Midlands Arch.*, XLI (1998), 132-4.

[31] A. Cossons, 'Warwickshire turnpikes', *Trans of the Birmingham Arch. Soc.*, LXIV (1941-2), 53-100, at 85; C.R. Elrington, 'Communications', *V.C.H. Warwicks.*, VII, 26-42, at 28.

[32] Roman road surveyors could achieve great accuracy over long distances, with lengths of a road many miles apart being laid out on exactly the same line: B.P. Hindle, *Roads, Tracks and their Interpretation* (1993), 32, 35-7. But they were usually sensitive to the demands of the local natural topography: 'slavish adherence to a rigid line is certainly not to be looked for if the ground does not favour it': I.D. Margary, *Roman Ways in the Weald*, 3rd edn (London, 1965), 48.

[33] J.E.B Gover, A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Warwickshire*, Engl. Place-Name Soc., vol. XIII (Cambridge, 1936), 39.

[34] It is far likelier that the road formed an existing line in the landscape which was convenient for use as the boundary between the manor of Birmingham and those of Edgbaston and Moseley than that it evolved along the existing line of that boundary. Since the boundary was formed in the Anglo-Saxon period and the road is a long-distance one characteristically composed of long straight lengths, it is almost certainly of Roman origin.

[35] In this paper references to a modern road which perpetuated the lines of an ancient one will sometimes be made in terms which suggest that it still does so in 2001, when in reality the major reshaping of Birmingham's landscape in the late twentieth century has removed part or all of it. The use of the present tense, therefore, can safely be taken to refer only to the roads depicted on the Provisional Edition of the Ordnance Survey Six-Inch Survey, sheets SP 08 NW (1966), NE (1956), SW (1968), and SE (1956).

[36] In Kingswinford parish at SO 386288.

[37] M.J. Wise, 'Some factors influencing the growth of Birmingham', *Geography*, XXXIII (1948), 176-90, at 179.

[38] Pers. comm.

[39] W.B. Bickley and J. Hill, *Survey of the Borough and Manor or Demesne Foreign of Birmingham made in the First Year of the Reign of Queen Mary, 1553* (Birmingham, 1890); Gill, *Short History*, map on 89; Wise, 'Growth of Birmingham', 179; S. Reynolds, 'Agriculture', *V.C.H. Warwicks.*, VII, 246-50.

[40] This layout may well have an early medieval or earlier origin, despite evidence of open field agriculture in Birmingham and most adjacent manors: Reynolds, 'Agriculture', 247-8. Whenever enclosure was piecemeal and achieved by local agreements, the new fields usually comprised blocks of furlongs and strips. Consequently, their boundaries mirrored existing alignments in the landscape which very often perpetuated those of the local field systems before the creation of open fields. This means that many of the field boundaries shown on eighteenth-century and later maps may conform to a rectilinear alignment set out centuries before the creation of open fields in the area concerned.

[41] Shown on maps of Edgbaston of 1701 (reproduced in Chatwin, *History of Edgbaston*) and 1718 (reproduced as a single sheet in 1884: B.R.L. 373483), but not on Figures 1-3.

[42] Walker, 'Rea valley', 234-5.

[43] Samuel Bradford's 'Plann of the Estate of Ravenhurst at Camp Hill' of 1748 (B.R.L. 379050). Road 18 is perpetuated by Stratford Place and Sandy Lane and, beyond the junction with the modern Coventry Road, by Watery Lane. There was also a by-pass to the west of Ravenhurst, followed by the early to mid twentieth-century course of Moseley Road (not shown on Figure 3).

[44] Tomlinson's map of the manor of Bordesley of 1760 (B.R.L. 371058).

[45] Chatwin, *History of Edgbaston*, 13.

[46] Bassett, 'Anglo-Saxon Birmingham', 17-19.

[47] To the west of Harborne church the road survives with very few breaks in its line, mainly as a modern road but sometimes as a track or path, through the parishes of Northfield, Frankley and Romsley and into Belbroughton. Thereafter its (probable) course survives only intermittently but appears to run to the historic centre of Chaddesley Corbett.

[48] Wise, 'Growth of Birmingham', 177.

[49] See note 40.

[50] E.g. N.J. Baker, 'Street-plan analysis of the study area', in C. Mould, *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of Part of the Digbeth Millennium Quarter, Birmingham City Centre* (Birmingham Univ. Field Arch. Unit, Report No. 575, 1999), 13-18.

[51] Baker, 'Town-plan analysis of Digbeth'; Baker, 'Street-plan analysis'; N.J. Baker and R.A. Holt, *Urban Growth and the Church: Gloucester and Worcester* (forthcoming).

[52] Gover *et al.*, *Place-Names of Warwicks.*, 38.

[53] On the earliest known detailed map of Birmingham, Westley's of 1731, it is called Beast Market (plate on front cover; Figure 2).

[54] Roads 1-18 on Figure 3 are identified in the text. Several other roads in the modern landscape (not all of them still continuous), are likely to be of similar antiquity. Road 19 is represented by Northfield Road and Wood Lane; road 20 by Selly Oak Road, Oak Tree Lane, Harborne Lane, Harborne Park Road, Lordswood Road, Bearwood Road and part of Smethwick's High Street; road 21 by Metchley Lane; road 22 by Hay Green Lane (22a) and St Stephen's Road and Dog Pool Lane (22b); road 23 by Stratford Road; and

road 24 by Birchfield Road, Park Lane, Rocky Lane and Alum Rock Road. Road 21 may well loosely mirror the continuation south-westwards (not shown on Figure 3) of road 4, a putative Roman road. If so, it undoubtedly represents a surviving fragment of one which merged with the road from Worcester and Droitwich (road 6), meeting its modern counterpart Bristol Road South in the centre of Northfield, which it approached on a line now mirrored by Bell Hill.

[55] Holliday, 'St Martin's church', 50.

[56] E.g. Gill, *Short History*, 9; R.A. Pelham, 'The growth of settlement and industry *c*.1100-*c*.1700', in *Birmingham and its Regional Setting. A Scientific Survey* (Birmingham, 1950), 135-58, at 140; Skipp, *Greater Birmingham*, 9, 25; Chinn, *One Thousand Years*, 28.

[57] Holt, *Birmingham*, 4; Baker, 'Town-plan analysis of Digbeth'.

[58] I am grateful to John Blair, Lawrence Butler, Richard Holt and Michael Spearman for discussions of this point.

[59] E.g. M. Aston and J. Bond, *The Landscape of Towns* (London, 1976), 89; M.W. Beresford and J.K.S. St Joseph, *Medieval England. An Aerial Survey,* 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1979), 224, 229.

[60] There can be no doubt that it stood within the market-place itself (Baker, 'Town-plan analysis', 11 & fig 4), rather than on or beyond one of its sides (as many churches did which existed before the market-place adjacent to each one's site was laid out, and which often were themselves responsible for the market-place's creation).

[61] Holt, *Birmingham*, 4.

[62] Bassett, 'Anglo-Saxon Birmingham', 19.

[63] In Birmingham's vicinity Handsworth's church is first referred to in 1200 and was evidently an independent parish church by 1228: G. Wrottesley, 'Curia Regis Rolls of the reigns of Richard I and King John', *Collns for Hist. of Staffs.*, Wm. Salt Soc. [hereafter *S.H.C.*], III, 55; H.E. Savage, 'The Great Register of Lichfield Cathedral known as the Magnum Registrum Album', *S.H.C.* for 1924, 251 (no. 524). West Bromwich's existed by 1149, when it was confirmed to Worcester cathedral priory: R.R. Darlington (ed.), *Cartulary of Worcester Cathedral Priory (Register 1)*, Pipe Roll Soc., new ser., XXXVIII, 1968, 42. Edgbaston's is not first mentioned until 1260x79, when it was a chapel of Harborne's: Savage, 'Great Register', 24 (no. 54). Northfield had a church by 1086: Farley, *Domesday Book*, fo. 177b; F. Thorn and C. Thorn (eds), *Domesday Book. 16: Worcestershire* (Chichester, 1982) 23,2. Yardley's existed by the late 1180s, when it was a chapel of Aston's: *V.C.H. Warwicks*, VII, 374 and the refs cited there in n. 89. Those at Aston and Harborne were Anglo-Saxon mother-churches: Bassett, 'Anglo-Saxon Birmingham', 17-20.

[64] Beresford & St Joseph, *Aerial Survey*, 222-6; P. Drury, 'Braintree: excavations and research, 1971-76', *Essex Arch. and History*, 3rd ser., VIII (1976), 1-143, at 134-5; S. Bassett, 'Church and diocese in the west midlands: the transition from British to Anglo-Saxon control', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds), *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, 1992), 15-40, at 29-35.

[65] Hutton, *An History of Birmingham*, 233-4.

[66] No new graveyard was available until St Philip's was opened in 1715. For those still living in the parish of St Martin's an overflow graveyard was provided in 1807, when 2½ acres of land were bought in Park Street: Hutton, *An History of Birmingham*, 234; *idem*, *The History of Birmingham, with Considerable Additions [by Josiah Green]*, 6th edn (London, 1835), 245.

[67] There is uncertainty concerning the original dedication of the priory/hospital and its church. All seven references to them made between 1284x85 and 1327 give the dedication simply as St Thomas. This is presumably St Thomas the Apostle - as Dugdale, among others, understood it to be: W. Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 2nd edn in 2 vols (London, 1730), II, 903; *idem*, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel, 6 vols in 8 (London, 1849), VI.2, 777. But from 1344 onwards the dedication is almost always given as St Thomas the Martyr, the single exception being

in 1360 (R.A. Wilson (ed.), 'The Second Register of Bishop Robert de Stretton', *S.H.C.*, new ser., VIII (1905), 159). 1344 is a significant date, for it was when bishop Northburgh made a visitation, finding the house 'in a most miserable plight' and vigorously reforming it (Bishop Hobhouse, 'The register of Robert de Norbury, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry', *S.H.C.*, I (1880), 241-88, at 274; J.C. Cox, 'The hospital of St Thomas, Birmingham', *V.C.H. Warwicks.*, II (1908), 108-9, 108). Since it is his revised regulations which contain the very first reference to St Thomas the Martyr, it is likely that it was introduced by Northburgh, conceivably by a formal act of rededication after the house's reformation, and that it replaced an earlier dedication to St Thomas the Apostle.

[68] Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, II, 903; Gover *et al.*, *Place-Names of Warwicks.*, 37.

[69] There has been disagreement about when the priory/hospital was dissolved, apparently because of an absence of evidence bearing directly on the event. Some have said 1536 (eg Gill, *History of Birmingham*, 37; C.R. Elrington and P.M. Tillott, 'The growth of the city', *V.C.H. Warwicks.*, VII, 4-25, at 6), and others 1546 (eg Cox, 'St Thomas, Birmingham', 108; D. Knowles and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses, England and Wales*, 2nd edn (Harlow, 1971), 343). It is likely that 1536 is the correct date of its dissolution. However, the chantry which had been founded in 1350 'at the Lady altar' in St Thomas's church *(List of Inquisitions Ad Quod Damnum. Part II* (London, 1906), 450) evidently survived to 1546, when Henry VIII's commissioners inspected it, mistakenly referring to St Thomas's as *Libera capella beate marie*, 'the free chapel of the Blessed Mary' (Public Record Office [hereafter P.R.O.] E 301/31/29), a misnomer occasionally found in the last years of the church's existence because of the importance of the chantry which it housed. The latter almost certainly lasted to 1547, the first year of Edward VI's reign, when the remaining chantries (which his father may have been planning to reform, not suppress) were dissolved (N. Orme and W. Webster, *The English Hospital 1070-1570* (London, 1995), 159-60).

[70] R.M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England* (London, 1909), xvii-xviii.

[71] Orme & Webster, *The English Hospital*, 35.

[72] Clay, *Medieval Hospitals*, 205.

[73] *List of Inquisitions Ad Quod Damnum. Part I* (London, 1904), 14.

[74] B.R.L. 94314 (an undated transcript of a survey of Birmingham (P.R.O. SC 12/4/1) made in 1529); B.R.L. 90377 (a transcript of 1887 of an English translation in the Archer Colln. of Capt. Saunders's Warwicks. material, vol. 7, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Record Office, Stratford-upon-Avon (ER 1/67, fos 42-6, no. 593) of the lost original of a survey of the manor of Birmingham of 1545); Bickley & Hill, *Survey*.

[75] *Calendar of Patent Rolls. Edward II. AD 1307-1313* (London, 1894), 305.

[76] *Inquisitions Ad Quod Damnum. Part II,* 450.

[77] Joseph Hill produced a conjectural plan of Birmingham as it was in 1553 which shows the lands listed in the surveys of 1529, 1545 and 1553 and in other sources: B.R.L. 149413 (also published in Bickley & Hill, *Survey*, and Watts, 'Birmingham Moat', fig. 4 on 16). It identifies, as far as possible, the lands in the vicinity of the borough which had belonged to the priory/hospital.

[78] Hobhouse, 'Register of Robert de Norbury', 274; P.R.O. E 301/31/29; A. Kreider, *English Chantries. The Road to Dissolution* (Cambridge, Mass. & London, 1979), 54.

[79] I am grateful to Richard Holt for his comments and advice on the subject matter of this paragraph.

[80] J. Hill and R.K. Dent, *Memorials of the Old Square* (Birmingham, 1897), 7; R. Graham, *English Ecclesiastical Studies* (London, 1929), 109.

[81] B.R.L. 90377.

[82] Bickley & Hill, *Survey*; Gill, *History of Birmingham*, 37.

[83] Farley, *Domesday Book*, fo. 243a; Plaister, *Domesday Book: Warwicks.*, 27,5.

[84] In this subsidy roll and in the one of 1332 there also appears 'Richard at [the] chapel', who is presumably the same man as the 'Richard the priors clerk at chapele' allegedly recorded in 1330: W.F. Carter and E.A. Fry (eds), 'Lay Subsidy Roll, Warwickshire, 1327', *Trans Midland Record Soc.*, Supplement to vols III-VI (1899-1902), 3-6, 37;

W.F. Carter (transl. & ed.), *The Lay Subsidy Roll for Warwickshire of 6 Edward III (1332)* (Dugdale Soc., London, 1926), 70; Hill & Dent, *Memorials*, 5. Although the chapel is not identified in the rolls, at this date it must be St Thomas's. It is not recorded in the papal taxation of *c*.1291 because hospitals were formally exempted, 'and as this valuation was the basis of papal taxation thereafterwards, the exemption was permanent': Orme & Webster, *The English Hospital*, 96, citing Graham, *English Ecclesiastical Studies*, 290, 298.

[85] B.R.L. 94314; *Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Henr. VIII auctoritate regia institutus*, 6 vols (London, 1810-34), III, 82b; P.R.O. E 301/31/29.

[86] E.F. Jacob (ed.), *The Register of Henry Chichele Archbishop of Canterbury 1414-1443. Volume I*, Canterbury & York Soc., XLV (1943), 256-7.

[87] Scholars have not agreed on the date of the priory/hospital's dissolution: see note 69.

[88] Hutton, *An History of Birmingham*, 189; Hutton, *The History of Birmingham*, 334; Hill & Dent, *Memorials*, 8.

[89] Hutton, *An History of Birmingham*, 189; Hill & Dent, *Memorials*, 8.

[90] Hutton, *The History of Birmingham*, 334; Hill & Dent, *Memorials*, 8.

[91] Hutton, *An History of Birmingham*, 189.

[92] Altered to 'the garden' in Hutton, *The History of Birmingham*, 334.

[93] Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, II, 903; Bickley & Hill, *Survey*, n. 28 on 12-13.

[94] If the Inn's 'premises', identified in 1835 as its garden (see note 92), are what were later described as its bowling green, they lay to the rear and are now below the Great Western Arcade: Bickley & Hill, *Survey*, n. 28 on 12-13.

[95] Dugdale, *Warwickshire*, II, 903.

[96] Hill & Dent, *Memorials*, 8.

[97] Elrington, 'Communications', 40.

[98] B.R.L. 73382; B.R.L. 14002, Bickley & Hill, *Survey*, 74 & n. 112.

[99] Which it would have joined only a very short distance away from the junction of Bull Street and Dale End.

[100] Bickley & Hill, *Survey*, n. 57 on 32, n. 66 on 38-9.

[101] 'The number of English Augustinian houses founded at pre-existing churches, if it cannot be even approximately assessed, was certainly very considerable.': J.C. Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into England* (London, 1950), 148.

[102] Its location on the crest of the sandstone ridge, just below the point at which it begins to drop noticeably to the north-east and by a major road junction, would be an appropriately prominent one for a church which had a solely pastoral role from the outset.

[103] J.C. Cox, 'The hospital of St Leonard, Northampton', *V.C.H. Northants.*, II (1906), 159-61, at 159.

[104] *Ibid.*, 159-60.

[105] *Ibid.*, 160.

[106] Clay, *Medieval Hospitals*, pl. xii opp. 117; M.B. Honeybourne, 'The hospital of St Giles-in-the-Fields, *V.C.H. Middlesex*, I (1969), 206-10, at 206-7; D. Sullivan, *The Westminster Corridor* (London, 1994), 79-80 & map M.

[107] *Valor*, III, 285, 291; J.C. Cox, 'The hospital of St Giles, Norwich', *V.C.H. Norfolk,* II (1906), 442-6, at 442; Orme & Webster, *The English Hospital*, fig. 12 on 96.

[108] J.C. Cox, 'The hospital of St Paul, Norwich', *V.C.H. Norfolk*, II, 447-8, at 447; T.M. Fallow, 'The hospital of St Nicholas, York', *V.C.H. Yorks.*, III (1913), 346-9, at 346; R. Surtees, 'The city of Durham', in *idem*, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* (4 vols, London, 1816-40), IV, pt 2, 67-8 & n. *u*; M.E. Cornford, 'The hospital of St Mary Magdalen, Durham', *V.C.H. Durham*, II (1907), 119-20, at 120; J.W.F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1965), 343, 345.

[109] T.M. Fallow, 'The hospital of St Nicholas, Yarm', *V.C.H. Yorks.*, III, 335-6, at 336.

[110] M.W. Beresford and H.P.R. Finberg, *English Medieval Boroughs: a Hand-list* (Newton

Abbot, 1973), 189.

[111] J.C. Cox, 'The hospital of Armston', *V.C.H. Northants.*, II, 149-50, at 149 & n. 5.

[112] Farley, *Domesday Book*, fo. 221b; F. Thorn and C. Thorn (eds), *Domesday Book 21: Northamptonshire* (Chichester, 1979), 6a,14.

[113] P.R.O. E 301/31/28-9.

[114] P.R.O. E 301/31/28.

[115] Orme & Webster, *The English Hospital*, 129-30.

[116] B.R.L. 88402 (which is an undated transcript of P.R.O. E 36/167, pp.1-18): 'et unum alium cotagium jacens juxta Cemiterium Capelle Beate Marie de Birmyncham' ('and another cottage lying next to the cemetery of the chapel of the Blessed Mary of Birmingham'). For a printed translation with notes and introduction: Bickley & Hill, *Survey*. For St Thomas's being referred to in these terms see note 69.

[117] J. Hill, 'Birmingham wills', *Trans Midland Record Soc.*, I (1896-97), 1-3, 12-15, 22-4, at 3, 12; *idem*, 'Birmingham wills, continued', *ibid.*, II (1897-98), 24-33, at 30; *idem*, 'Birmingham wills', *ibid.*, VI (1902), 3-9, at 3.

[118] Hill, 'Birmingham wills' (1896-97), 1, 14; *idem*, 'Birmingham wills' (1902), 3.

[119] The other published sixteenth-century wills of people connected with Birmingham all stipulate burial in the church of Aston. The burial registers of St Martin's church begin in 1554 (D.J. Steel, *National Index of Parish Registers. Volume 5*, rev. edn (Chichester, 1971), 217), and so wills provide the only written evidence of individual early sixteenth-century burials in Birmingham.

[120] Hill, 'Birmingham wills' (1896-97), 2, 14, 22; *idem*, 'Birmingham wills, continued', 27, 28; *idem*, 'Birmingham wills' (1902), 5.

[121] There are other areas within the city of Birmingham and in its vicinity with similar loosely rectilinear layouts of boundaries and local roads still prominent in the human landscape when it was first systematically mapped in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, these have yet to be studied in detail.

[122] I.e. his *ingas*. On them see Bassett, 'Anglo-Saxon Birmingham', 23.

[123] *Ibid.*, 17-19.

[124] It may have been permanently abandoned once the moated site was firmly established. However, a Dale Hall and a Whitehall Farm are known to have lain in the vicinity: T. Smith, *Memorials of Old Birmingham. Men and Names* (London & Birmingham, 1864), 33; Gover *et al.*, *Place-Names of Warwicks.*, 37, 39; Bickley & Hill, *Survey*, n. 72 on 44. Nothing useful is known about them, but both probably had a medieval origin and one of them may possibly represent a continuation of the original manorial site.

[125] I.e. Selly (Oak), Frankley, Northfield, Aston (including the later manors of Bordesley, Duddeston, Saltley, Nechells, and Little Bromwich), Witton, Erdington, Edgbaston, Birmingham, Perry Barr, Little Barr and Handsworth: Farley, *Domesday Book*, fos 177a-b, 243a; 250a; Thorn & Thorn, *Domesday Book: Worcs.*, 23,1-3, 23,5; Plaister, *Domesday Book: Warwicks.*, 27,1-5; A. Hawkins and A. Rumble, *Domesday Book. 24: Staffordshire* (Chichester, 1976), 12,27-29.

[126] Such intentional acts of landscape management can be shown to have happened elsewhere: refs in note 59, and S. Bassett, *Saffron Walden: Excavations and Research 1972-1980* (Council for Brit. Arch., Research Report 45, 1982), 19-20.

[127] Peter's father was William, the steward of Dudley (as Peter was too), but there is no record of who held Birmingham between 1086 and Peter's own lordship of it: *V.C.H. Warwicks.*, VII, 58.

[128] Baker, 'Town-plan analysis of Digbeth'; *idem*, 'Street-plan analysis'. It would mark a major advance in our knowledge and understanding of Birmingham's history - modern as well as medieval - if Nigel Baker could be persuaded to make a morphological study of the entire area of the eighteenth-century and earlier town.