CHAPTER IV

Having examined the twelve examples of shared churchyards in Norfolk (thirteen if we count Gillingham), we must now look at some of the more general topics arising from this examination.

A useful starting-point will be to see how they fit into the general pattern of settlements with more than one church. Reference to the map, Fig 4.1, will reveal that, while there is an even spread of multi-churched settlements within the county, those with tow in one yard are concentrated in the eastern half: a line drawn from Stiffkey to Blo'Norton will contain all of them except West Dereham. Conversely, those settlements where the churche o no share a yard are largely to be found in the western half, although there is a fair amount in the eastern, using the same line as a divider.

We have already referred to the possible link between the phenomenon of multiple church provision and manorial structure (*vide* Table 1, p 5 *supra*), and we need now to look at this in a little more detail. Using again the seven-level classification of complexity of manorial structure formulated by Campbell, it is not surprising that all the hundreds in the two highest levels are in the east of the county (Forehoe, Humbleyard, Blofield, Walsham, and Tunstead in level 1; Wayland is also, but is west of the line); Holt, Eynesford, South Erpingham, Taverham, Happing, Diss, and West Flegg in level 2). Equally, all the hundreds in levels 5 to 7 are, with the exception of Clavering (level 6) and Earsham (level 7) in the western half. A further analysis by hundreds may be useful at this point:

Table 4.1: analysis of multi-churched settlements by hundred.

Hundred	Level of manorial complexity	Parishes with shared yards	Parishes with 2+ churches not sharing yards
Blofield	1	0	1
Brothercross	5	0	1
Clackclose	4	1	6
Clavering	6	*(1)	0
Depwade	3	0	0
Diss	2	0	0
Docking	7	0	0
Earsham	7	0	0
Erpingham, North	4	1	0
Erpingham, South	2	0	2
Eynesford	2	1	0
Flegg, East	3	0	2
Flegg, West	2	0	0

Forehoe	1	3	0
Freebridge Lynn	6	0	2
Freebridge Marshland	6	0	0
Gallow	5	0	0
Greenhoe, North	5	1	2
Greenhoe, South	5	0	3
Grimshoe	4	0	2
Guiltcross	3	1	1
Happing	2	0	0
Henstead	3	1	4
Humbleyard	1	1	1
Launditch	3	0	1
Loddon	4	1	2
Mitford	4	0	0
Shropham	3	0	2
Smithdon	7	0	1
Taverham	2	0	0
Tunstead	1	0	1
Walsham	1	1	0
Wayland	1	0	1

*Gillingham

The question which arises at once is why a complex manorial structure leads to sharing of churchyards, while a simpler one tends to the establishment of separate yards. If the second (or third) church is built to serve the needs of a second manor (perhaps we may say a second manor which is dominant, as of course many of these parishes have up to six manors), then one would expect it to be built on land belonging to that manor. If, however, it is to serve several manors, then one may expect it t be built on 'neutral' ground, such as an existing churchyard, in order to avoid any inter-manorial rivalry. This assumes the active co-operation of the manors concerned, and, in the case of churches built on an existing churchyard, the acquiescence of the owner or patron of the existing church. This, of course, leads us back to the point we made in Chapter I, that the churches strictly do not share a yard, but are placed in adjacent and contiguous yards, with little or no definition of the common boundary. Is the new church in fact founded on a fresh parcel of land, adjacent to the original churchyard, which is them assimilated into it? The sitings of some of the groups may lead us to question this, as the close physical proximity of some of the churches (*e.g.*, Barnham Broom, Stiffkey, and presumably the original buildings at Whitwell/Reepham) suggests the second building was fitted into an already predetermined site.

Another topic that suggest itself is that of parochial affiliation: how far did the residents identify with their church? We have seen that the idea of a definite internal boundary is unknown until the

enclosures (*cf* South Walsham and Reepham), and that, while open field agriculture was practised, the strip in question 'belonged' to the parish of the person who held it. The internal boundary only exists within these to parishes because they retained their dual parochial structure until very recently, and we know the boundaries to be post-enclosure constructs.[1] Whether, before the enclosures, there was any feeling of one part of the 'greater parish' belonging to one church, and another part to the other, is difficult, if not impossible, to determine. Did a man who moved from one end of the parish to the other change his church, or did he continue to be affiliated to his original one? We might, at this point, draw a parallel – which I believe may not be invalid – with those parishes with only one church, but where specific groups within the community were responsible for different parts of the church: as it might be, the youths of the parish for one chapel, the merchants the nave, the widows the shrine of some saint, etc. Whether there is any evidence for *geographical* groups within such a parish assuming responsibility is unclear (*e.g.*, the residents of an outlying green having responsibility for the upkeep of, say, the north transept), but this may be a further reason for the erection of two churches: the separate parts of the church becomes a separate building.[2]

It is, in a way, unfortunate that one of the only two parishes which continued to operate as separate units down to the usefully late date is the Reepham 'conurbation', for this, as I have already suggested, is operating in a way different from the other twelve: fusion rather than fission. It cannot, therefore, be used in contrast with South Walsham. Chambers tells the story of the inhabitants of Hackford who 'refused to billet a party of Cromwell's troops, on the ground that the document requiring them to do so referred to Reepham and not Hackford'.[3] This certainly shows that the inhabitants of the three villages knew where they lived: would the same have held true at South Walsham?

Antingham is the only other parish where the churches were held separately: St Margaret was united in 1748, not with St Mary, but with the adjacent parish of North Walsham, a situation which obtained until 2002, when they were reunited. However, the responsibility of North Walsham was limited to the upkeep of the ruin of St Margaret, and no pastoral or other involvement was ever provided.[4]

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[1] Hackford being united with Whitwell, of course.

[2] *cf* Rosser, 'Parochial Conformity …', pp 183-187.

[3] Chambers, *General History*, p 225.

[4] North Walsham was held in plurality with St Margaret before the union. Thomas Jeffrys was inducted to North Walsham in 1699 and to St Margaret in 1701; John Fowkes to both livings in 1736. *Cf* Blomefield, XI, p 78.

The dates of loss of the second church are also interesting: as we have already seen, some have substantial ruins (only Whitwell/Reepham still has two complete buildings), and others have little, if anything, to show. With the exceptions of Whitwell/Reepham and South Walsham, all the other groupings were reduced to one church by the eighteenth century – in all cases the reason for the abandonment of the one church is that a single church was sufficient for the village – and on occasion, that the village was unable to support two churches.

Table 4.2: date of redundancy or abandonment of second church (and see Table 4.3)

Parish	Date	Notes
Antingham St Margaret	<1703	union with Nth Walsham, 1748
Barnham Broom St Michael	1347	
Bedingham St Mary	C16	
Blo'Norton St Margaret	1394	13 May
East Carleton St Peter	1550	union with St Mary, 1440
West Dereham St Peter	C16	
Great Melton All Saints	1715	
Rockland St Margaret	?pre-1540	
Stiffkey St Mary (?)	c1559	
South Walsham St Lawrence	1827	fire; union with St Mary 1880
Wicklewood St Andrew	<1367	union with All Saints 1424
Gillingham All Saints	1748	
Hackford All Saints	1543	burned; united with Whitwell
Whitwell St Michael	1935	union with Reepham

A point that has not been raised so far is that these enclosures with their double church groupings have a parallel in the monastic enclosures of the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic traditions. I have deliberately excluded this from consideration until now, as what can be said on this is, of necessity, highly speculative. However, both Anglo-Saxon and Irish monasteries are noted for their plurality of churches, and it has been suggested that the tenuousness of this parallel is given slightly more strength when it is remembered that East Anglia was evangelized in part by Irish monks (Fursa, Foillan, Ultan, Gobban, and Dicuil).[5] This aspect I think to be highly doubtful, but it may just be possible that we are, inone or two cases, dealing with the remains of some sort of Anglo-Saxon monastic establishment: the more so when we recall the east-west alignment of the Stiffkey and Rockland churches, and compare them with such establishments as St Augustine, Canterbury, and Wearmouth-Jarrow.

> The number of 'abbots' whose names occur in the Saxon charters during the century before King Edgar as masters of sites not known otherwise to have been monastic, and which certainly had on them at the time nothing approaching to a regular monastic community, is a witness

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[5] *Cf* Mansfield p 41.

to the fact that all ecclesiastical property was in the hands of private owners.[6] Certainly we know that there were many 'abbeys' in Anglo-Saxon England which were that in name only:

> … there are innumerable places, as we all know, allowed the name of monasteries by a most foolish manner of speaking, but having nothing of the monastic way of life; some of which I would wish to be transformed … form wanton living to chastity, from vanity to truth, from overindulgence of the belly and from gluttony to continence and piety of heart …[7]

It may, then, just be possible that in some cases we have a monastic site with a parochial church and monastic one, and that the monastic one loses its status and gains equal parochial status with its neighbour.

A final point to be raised is that the site of the original church (always assuming that one is older than the other) is of such importance in the mind of the settlement that the second church is built on it as well. It may be that it was a pre-Christian burial ground or other sacred site, or even a Christian site of great significance now lost to us.[8]

The explanation for the building of two churches in one churchyard is as elusive as ever: the best we can do is refer back to the various suggestions dealt with above, and say that any or all of them may be the cause in each case: certainly no one of them will answer in all thirteen cases.

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[6] D Knowles, *Monastic* Order, p 592
[7] Letter of Bede to Archbishop Ecgbert of York, quoted in R Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p 126
[8] *Cf* Rosser as above.

Table 4.3: bar-chart to show redundancy/abandonment of second church