

## CHAPTER V

We have remarked above that this topic has been the subject of much speculation,<sup>1</sup> and we appear even now to be little further forward. The most likely explanation, which Warner identified, is that the second church is explained as the result of a building project undertaken by a group of freemen. However, this merely explains the presence of the second church: it still does not explain *why* it shares the yard with its neighbour, nor, to any satisfactory extent, whether one church is older than the other, and, if so, which, and by how much. (The remaining architectural evidence is of little assistance here.)

We have also identified to other possible explanations, although these are of much less weight. The first is the idea that either Irish, or more probably, Anglo-Saxon monasticism is an underlying cause. The second, which so far we have mentioned inly in connexion with the ‘Two Sisters’ legend,<sup>2</sup> is that, as the legend always has two *sisters*, we may be looking at a result of partible inheritance. As with the monastic theory, this explanation is also tenuous in the extreme, but the fact that it survives at all, and is told in at least three of the groups, should perhaps incline us to pay it at least some attention.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond these three theories, we have identified a fourth the link between manorial complexity and multi-churching. The sharing of a churchyard tends to happen, as we have seen, in those hundreds where the level of manorial complexity is high, while the use of separate yards is more common in those where the level is low.<sup>4</sup>

The grouping of Reepham, Hackford, and Whitwell has also, on closer examination, revealed a possibility that it is working in the opposite direction from the other groups: the three settlements here appear to be coalescing rather than dividing.

It was one of the original aims of this study to try to explain the reasons for shared churchyards: as will have become apparent by now, this is next to impossible. We can say with some certainty why a settlement has two (or more) churches, whether in one yard or more, and we are in a position to make tentative suggestions why a yard is shared, but the true reason (if indeed there be only one) is, for the time being at least, likely to remain hidden. Peter Warner’s list contained thirty-eight examples, which we now know to be over-generous by twenty-five. The thirteen true examples (of which five are now known by documentary evidence alone) do at least fit some kind

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<sup>1</sup> See p 6 *supra*.

<sup>2</sup> See p 1 *supra*.

<sup>3</sup> It is told at Antingham, South Walsham, and the Reepham group. It may well have been (or still be) current in the others, but if so, I have not encountered it. East Carleton, where I was organist for some time, certainly never told it.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Tables 1 and 2 *supra*.

of geographical pattern, which Warner confessed he did not.<sup>5</sup> It may be that archaeological techniques (excavation, crop-mark photography, geophysics) will add further examples hitherto unsuspected, and this make further interpretation possible.

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<sup>5</sup> Warner, p 40.