7

AUTHORITY, CHALLENGE AND IDENTITY IN THREE GLOUCESTERSHIRE SAINTS' CULTS[1]

Graham Jones

EVIDENCE for religious devotion in the Middle Ages is at best fragmentary. Often the only surviving clues to local saints' cults in particular are found by chance: a stray documentary reference, or a place-name, perhaps; here a broken piece of sculpture, there the date of a fair. To understand medieval spirituality in the round, therefore, it is necessary to be familiar with what has been lost, as well as what is known, including the likely character of a fully-formed cult in terms of its anatomy and ecology. This is a useful starting point. It emphasises how minimal is our knowledge of localised cults in particular, but it also assists their reconstruction. Further, it provides a framework for applying the evidence of saints' cults to wider societal studies - of authority and community, for example - since the activities described grow out of social needs and interaction. In turn, such studies enhance our understanding of the origins and development of the cults themselves.

It is possible to model the typical, fully-formed saint's cult by grouping its expected components into four categories. *Physical presence and perceived effect* focuses on the essentials for all but a few Christian cults: body, tomb, reported miracles, corporeal relics, and secondary ('contact') relics.[2] *Celebration of the saint and the saint's doings* is concerned with the construction and maintenance of the cult by the Church: recognition of sanctity by acclamation or episcopal/pontifical endorsement (canonisation); feasts (the saint's day(s) as entered in kalendars); liturgy (inclusion of the saint in litanies and celebration in hymns, collects, lections, and sermons); life story (hagiography, often with recognised motifs); iconography, featuring also the saint's attributes (artefactual symbols of martyrdom and/or efficacy); songs and occasionally dances; and drama (including 'miracle' plays).[3] *Engagement and supplication* focuses on response by the laity: attendance at a shrine (often stimulated by translation(s) of the body); pilgrimage (especially sacrificial); processions (of images, relics, banners); physical contact; burial near the saint; tertiary relics (such as a saint's cell); miraculous images, including icons; offerings (*ex-votos*, candles, bequests, etc.); souvenirs (domestic statues, badges, etc.); the perceived efficacy of the saint for particular conditions, intentions, and patronage.[4] *Further commemoration*

follows the cult into the wider world and society: the association of the saint with landscape features and other aspects of natural world, for example wells and flora; dedications in the saint's honour, particularly of religious buildings, altars, and other devotional *foci*; gilds and confraternities; fairs held at times of the saint's festival(s); baptismal naming patterns; communal festivities and other, more general calendar customs; folklore and pseudo-history (the association of the saint with group identity).[5]

The value of an interdisciplinary approach in the task of reconstructing a saint's cult is immediately apparent. A number of strategies present themselves. Associated with the French *Annales* school is the quasi-scientific method, involving the systematic collection of evidence and its subjection to statistical and qualitative analysis. The Trans-national Database and Atlas of Saints' Cults is an example of such methodology.[6] A complementary strategy is anthropological: observation of devotion in the living laboratory of a contemporary society and a retrospective assessment of medieval material. A somewhat similar but sociological strategy is to relate, explore and compare what is known about the social processes involved in the cult under study, as historians do when attempting to read the minds of actors in historical events in an effort to explain and contextualise those events. Few social processes are more important to the student of medieval matters than those associated with authority and community. Both lie at the heart of medieval devotion, authority because the *praesentia* of a saint, the location of sanctity and devotion, resulted from decision-making, approval and sanctions, and community because the saint's *potentia*, his or her perceived supernatural power, depended on group recognition and celebration of efficacy, however much its effects were felt through intensely individual experience.

This paper adopts principally the third, sociological approach, but borrows from the first two, and looks for signs of processes relating to community and authority in what is known of three enigmatic and hitherto undiscussed cases of religious devotion in a single English county, Gloucestershire.[7] The cults were chosen because in each there was a uniqueness for the county, plus intriguing historical problems. The hermit Antony of Egypt was invoked at Kinley chapel in Nympsfield near Stroud, the only building in his honour in Gloucestershire. Likewise unique to the county was the dedication of the church of Edward King and Martyr at Stow-on-the-Wold. The supposed virgin martyr Arilda of Thornbury was an archetypal local saint, commemorated in that parish and at Gloucester Abbey, now the Cathedral.

The paper suggests that 'authority' and 'community' in the context of medieval religious devotion are not mutually exclusive social constructs when these terms are used to refer to *actors* rather than actions - those exercising control or constituting a social group. In this sense 'authority' and 'community' overlap. Often one grew out of the other, and on occasion it seems even that one

could not operate without the other. This has implications for our understanding of religious activity generally. It suggests that concepts of two opposed religious modes, 'popular' on the one hand, 'elite' or 'official' on the other, may be unhelpful, if not at times invalid. However, there is another way of using the terms 'authority' and 'community' and that is in respect of *actions* rather than actors: authorisation and communality. When we address the nature of these concepts and the behavioural processes associated with them, a rather clearer relationship between them emerges.

ANTONY AT KINLEY

The history of Kinley chapel revolves around communities rather than individuals. It is essentially about the authorisation, the legitimacy, conferred by their communal activities (whether pilgrimage, assembly or contest) on the invocation of supernatural assistance and the sense of identity which flowed from it.

That sense of identity, and a desire to protect communal assets which the chapel represented, was still sufficient after the Reformation to provoke the local community into subverting the authority of the State. A Star Chamber inquiry in 1586 concluded that the villagers of Nympsfield had concealed from the Chantry Commissioners of Edward VI part of the endowment of the chapel.[8] Secular concerns probably sparked the communal deceit: the 'concealed lands' included the village butts. Religious resentment was also present, however. Within recent memory a chantry priest had been removed to Fairford to serve as the lord of the manor's domestic chaplain.[9] It seems a compromise was reached, for one plot became the site of the parish house. Here was an example of authority and community opposed at extreme ends of the body politic, yet brokering a settlement authorised by common consent. The incident may also represent a late example of a shadowy and imperfectly understood medieval institution at work, the 'community of the vill', before local self-government was subsumed into the parish vestry.[10]

Argument and compromise over the saint's chapel had happened before. In 1185 another community, the monks of Gloucester Abbey who had a priory at Nympsfield as tenants-in-chief of the king, agreed that Nicholas fitzHarding, a member of the district's leading landholding family, should set up a chantry for two priests at Kinley.[11] This authorisation was sealed on payment of an annual pension in lieu of lost fees and offerings to the mother church of Frocester, which the religious community also possessed.[12] The benefactions which placed the monks in control of manors and churches, and that of FitzHarding's chantry, would have been expressed as gifts to the respective patronal saints, a convenient convention which enabled religious assets to pass between sets of hands under supposed heavenly authority.
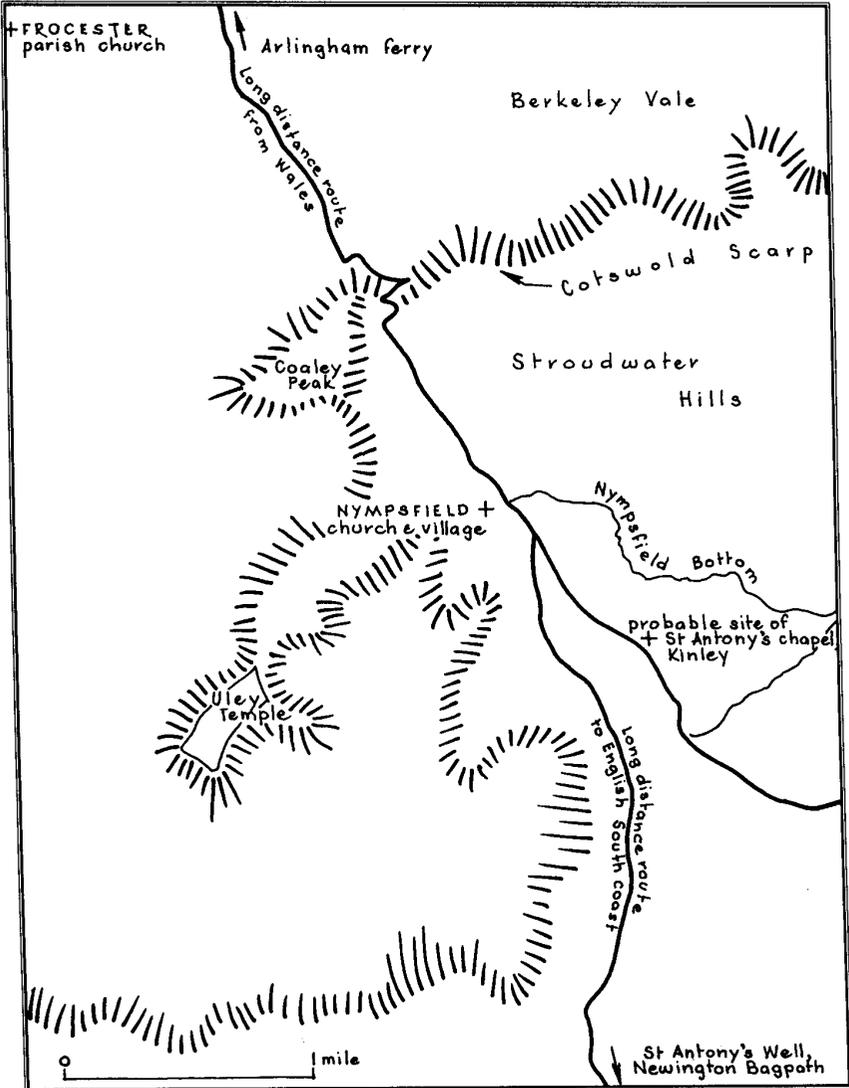
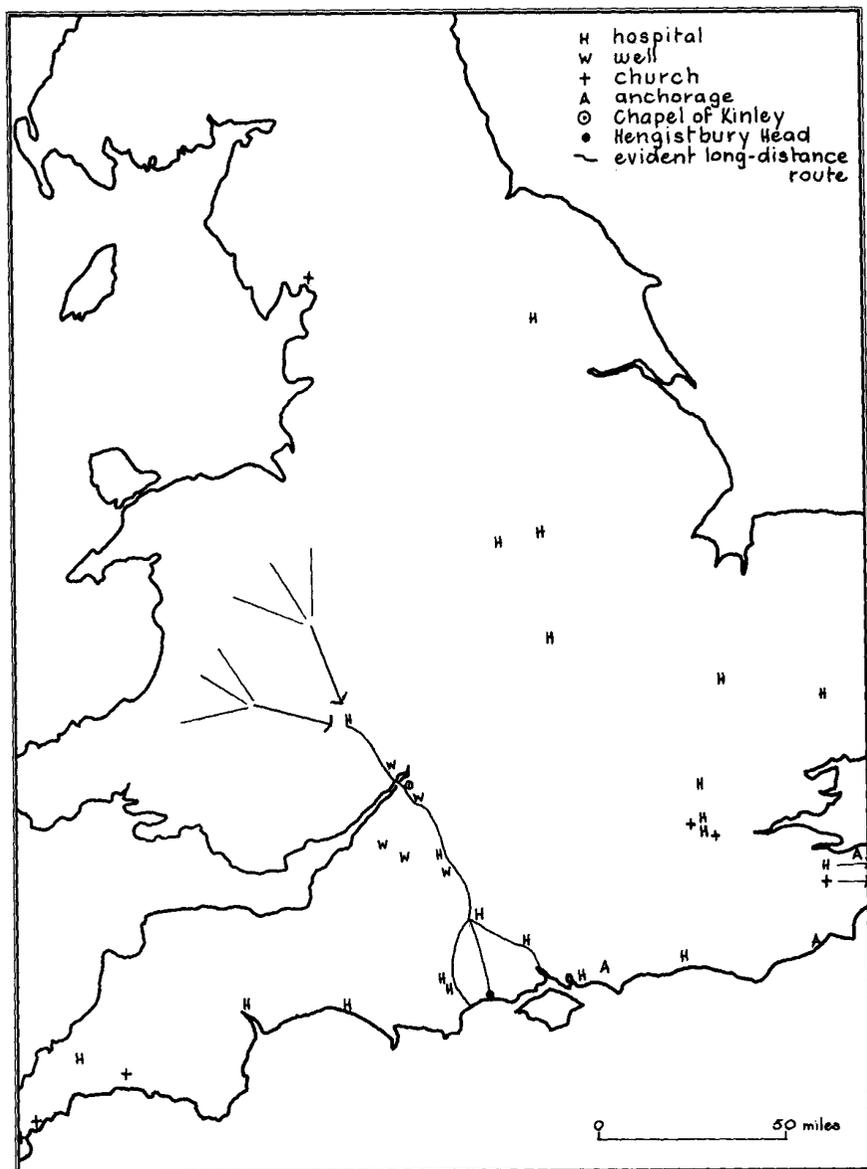Fig. 1: St Antony's Chapel, Kinley, and its neighbourhood

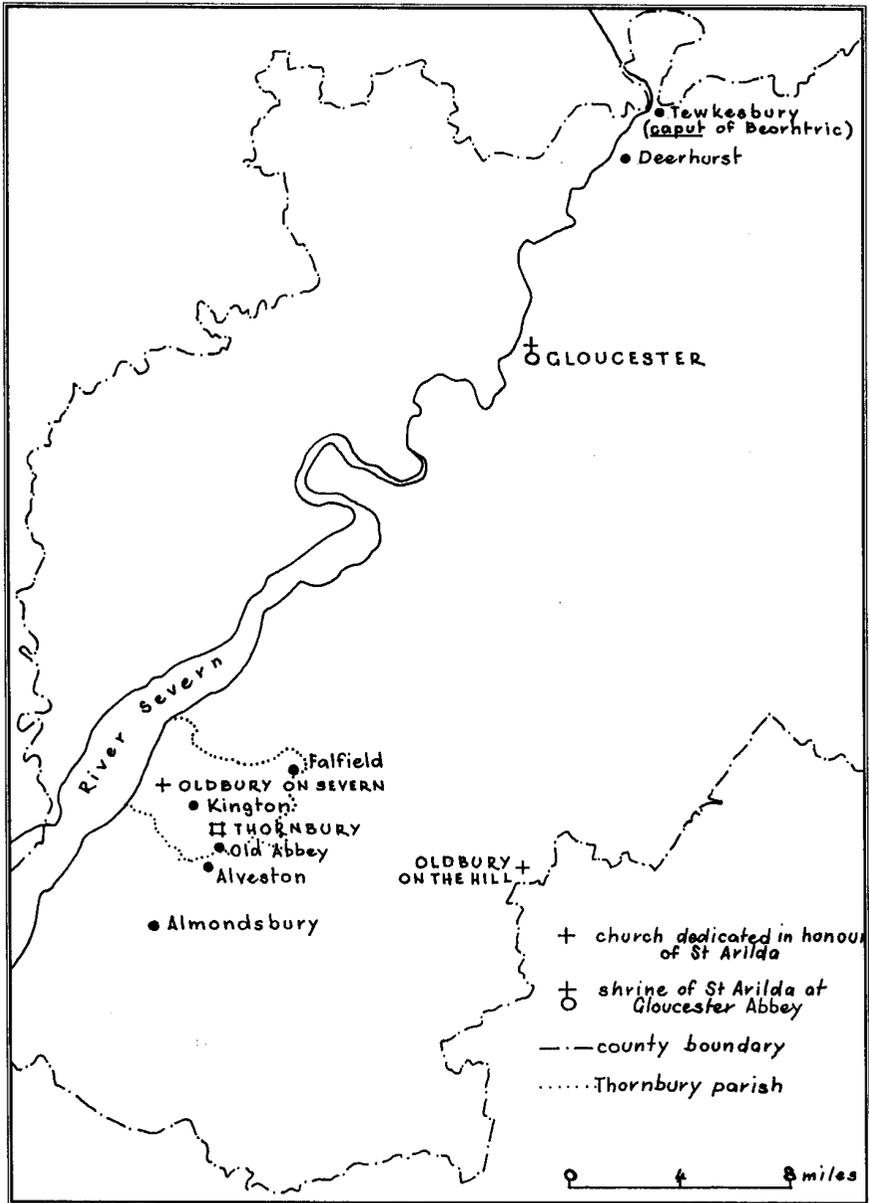Fig. 2: The cult of St Antony in medieval England

Fig. 3: Gloucestershire and the cult of St Arilda

Though the chantry and hence the chapel was set up under private authority, its religious legitimacy came to depend – perhaps depended from the start – on the authorisation of a particular group of people with interests in common. This was a group of devotees who formed a sub-set of the chapel's worshippers. In the eighteenth-century histories of Gloucestershire by Atkyns and Rudder, it was said that at the east end of the chapel of St Antony was a large image of the saint accompanied by a 'great boar' and Rudder said it was visited annually by 'the West Britons, to make oblations for their *sins*' (my italics).[13] Both Atkyns and Rudder based their texts on a manuscript collection of notes by Richard Parsons, chancellor of the diocese of Gloucester from 1670 to *c*.1690. Examination of his text, which was based on replies to questonnaires sent to incumbents, reveals that it differs from theirs in one important respect. He wrote that the 'west Britons' visited Nympsfield to make oblations for their '*swine*'.[14] Antony's Welsh devotees were drovers. Before discussing the implication of this in more detail, it is worth noting that this travelling community's visits were still remembered in the local community a century-and-a-half after the Reformation, such was the force of their implicitly authorising attendances. Withdrawal of their approval (and its monetary expression) might well have put the chapel's welfare at risk, but there is no evidence that this happened. Rather, the chapel's eventual abandonment appears to have resulted from a combination of the priest's withdrawal by private authority, appropriation of the endowment by royal authority, and if it was needed, we may be sure, Puritan iconoclasm, the 'authority' of sectarian dogma and terror.

The adoption of authoritarian dogma into the control of communal activities was indeed encountered here, though in an early modern context and justified in benign terms. In 1709 summer games held on St Bartholomew's Day and the weekend following at Coaley Peak, just over Nympsfield's boundary and still within the ancient parish of Frocester (see Fig. 1), were suppressed by the Gloucestershire magistrates as 'a great scandal of religion and government'.[15] This further challenge to local self-authorisation and -authentication has important implications for understanding processes of communality in respect of St Antony's chapel and his devotees. Nympsfield's parochial patron was St Margaret, according to both Atkyns and Rudder, but Bartholomew according to a nineteenth-century incumbent, James Silvester.[16] Though fairs on Bartholomew's Day, August 24, were numerous, medieval church dedications in his honour, as at Coaley and Newington Bagpath (just south of Nympsfield) were rare. Whether Silvester was recording an echo of the Coaley Peak games, or recovering some other interest in Bartholomew at Nympsfield, here is a saint whose characteristics in the medieval collective consciousness had crucial overlaps with those of Antony. Both were associated with exorcism, and both with diseases of the skin, Bartholomew because he had been flayed alive and

Antony as the adopted patron of the dermatological Order of St Antony of Vienne.

Antony's patronage led by a sequence of popular mental associations to his invocation as a protector of livestock by agrarian workers like the Welsh drovers at Kinley. The Hospitallers of St Antony were established *c.* 1100 to treat victims of a fearsome skin disease, ergotism, caused by fungal contamination of rye bread and henceforth to be known as St Antony's Fire.[17] A royal licence authorised these Brothers to profit from herds of pigs allowed to forage in the streets. Hence the pigs – at Kinley 'a great boar' – which accompanied Antony in his late medieval iconography. Pigs, a symbol of cleanliness, represent a distinct thread of religious authorisation in Antony's cult, since he and Eligius (St Loy) were widely represented by the end of the middle ages as protecting the health of cattle and horses respectively ('cattle' in its generic meaning of 'livestock', including swine).[18]

Antony's visiting devotees implicitly authorised his cult at Kinley by giving thanks for his supernatural authority deployed on their behalf. A cloth fair kept in Nympsfield Bottom until *c.* 1650 might have attracted them together with other non-industrial merchandisers. Otherwise they may have been resting there, since Nympsfield lies on a well-defined long-distance route linking Hereford, junction for roads out of central Wales, with the valley of the Hampshire Avon which debouches into Christchurch harbour, Dorset (see Fig. 2). The potential antiquity of this route is demonstrated by the important Iron Age trading post on Hengistbury Head.[19] Along this route lay 'holy' wells at Mitcheldean, Devizes, and Newington Bagpath, where Antony's authority was invoked, probably on behalf of livestock.[20] At the same time the route links six of England's twenty-one hospitals of St Antony, so his authority as a healer was also familiar to the traveller.[21] Indeed the Hereford parish of All Saints, with its dependent chapels, was the royal endowment which partly paid for the authoritative work of St Antony's Hospital in London.[22]

It is possible that the chapel, and the revels, were expressions of a resilient, robust community of belief which derived much of the strength of its authority from a synchretic compromise fusing Christianity and more ancient competitors. It has been noted that both Antony and Bartholomew were held to be efficacious against mental illness and skin disease. It may be no accident, therefore, that one of the most important points on the route between Wales and the Channel in Late Antiquity and the beginning of the Early Middle Ages was a healing temple at Uley.[23] Its site lies a mile or so west of Nympsfield (see Fig. 1), whose name indicates 'cultivated land attached to a sacred shrine (*nemeton*)'.[24] Recent archaeology has shown that the temple was converted to Christian use in the fifth century, possibly lasting into the sixth or seventh.[25] Uley's shrine was a centre of healing under the tutelage of Mercury – with a ram by his side in its cult statue, respecting the same representational convention as

in the iconography of Antony and his pig.[26] When the temple's clientele converted to Christianity, the church authorities decided to compromise rather than destroy. Mercury's torso was used as rubble in the church building but his head was buried carefully alongside.[27] The statue was imbued with meaning by the converting community of believers as Antony's image was to be at Kinley. Both were emblems of supernatural authority recognised and authorised via communalities of understanding among devotees.

Secular authorities traded on these understandings, not least by endowing sacred buildings where such emblems could be accessed by, and attract offerings from the public. At the same time these same authorities' activities were often at the behest of believing communities, or designed to reach accommodation with them. No social group supplied more early medieval saints than the nobility. No group did more then or from the eleventh century onwards to promote the monasteries and gain their prayers.

ARILDA OF THORNBURY

Arilda's story is about authority, unjustly exercised in harassment and judicial murder.[28] An inscription seen by Leland at Gloucester Abbey in the early sixteenth century, with contemporary verses and a *Life*, now lost, said she was beheaded at Kington 'nigh to Thornbury' by 'Muncius, a tyrant', 'because she would not lie with him'.[29]

It is possible to read the story as an allegorical defence of their liberties by the religious community of Gloucester, a supernatural charter of authorisation. The monks obtained Arilda's cult by translation in the later eleventh or twelfth century, a probable gift from a lord (or lady) of Thornbury, possibly William the Conqueror's queen, Matilda, who held the wealthy manor and hence its parish church until her death in 1083.[30] A community of interests, centring on the authority of the ruler, linked the lords of Thornbury and the monks of Gloucester, in which city William customarily wore his crown at Christmas, thus emphasising a long history of royal involvement with the city.[31] Thornbury, almost certainly an earlier adjunct of the earldom of Mercia, subsequently became an important component of the Honour of the Earls of Gloucester.[32] As for the motif of the unjust ruler, the irony would not have been lost on later generations that Matilda supposedly obtained Thornbury, whose saint lost her head for refusing Muncius, because its previous owner Beorhtric refused *her* while she was as yet princess of Flanders.[33]

Arilda was presented at Gloucester as an icon of authority and prestige. Her figure appeared in the Lady Chapel's east window and reredos alongside other saints whose authoritative presence bolstered the monastic community and helped attract their community of clients.[34] An *oratio rythmica* or hymn in Arilda's honour, with collect, composed shortly before 1228 for use at

Gloucester, included an appeal to the loyalty of that wider community. This reference, to 'Gloucester's people and borders [that is, the shire]', was an implicit claim of authority over Arilda's remains and through her miracles, which Leland was told were many.[35]

Meanwhile Arilda stood as a symbol of self-authenticity for the local community in Thornbury parish, where her cult survived her translation.[36] They visited the chapel of Arilda on Cowhill, which dominates the saltmarsh at Oldbury-on-Severn and was sustained by its ownership by the lords of Thornbury;[37] frequented her 'holy' well at Kington; and knew the chapelry (and later parish) of Falfield by the additional name 'St Tyrrel' (see Fig. 3).[38] Some miles east, the church serving the Cotswold village of Oldbury-on-the-Hill shared Oldbury-on-Severn's patron saint as well as its name, hinting at some territorial or economic assocation between the two communities.[39] Conceivably Arilda's protection was invoked by families engaged in transhumance, seasonal settlement, involving not only the high Cotswold pastures but also the Severnside salt-marsh. The local community at Oldbury-on-Severn said that the site of its chapel was determined not by living human authority but supernaturally by Arilda through the agency of a cow; but whether Cowhill's name derived from this tradition or vice versa is uncertain.[40]

Historically, too, Arilda may have exercised her own authority, rather than simply becoming a victim of unjust authoritarian power (if there is any historicity in the tale) and providing posthumous authorisation for a community of monks in a dangerous world of rapacious secular lords. Just south of Thornbury is a site with an enclosing earthen bank and associated burials known since the sixteenth century as Old Abbey (see Fig. 3).[41] Moreover, Arilda's name (which appears to have been a short-form, perhaps of Aethelhild), puts her into a category of Gloucestershire saints with Old English names beginning with 'A'.[42] They are best explained as monastic founders belonging to the royal house of the Hwicce, from whom descended earls of Mercia and probably Matilda's predecessor at Thornbury, Beorhtric.[43] These founders carried innate authority because of their royal and monastic status, but also, perhaps, as surrogates for some ancient sense of ritual priesthood residing in the heads of families.[44] This would plausibly assign an historic Arilda to the seventh or eighth century, possibly in the context of the Christianisation of a ruling community which derived its immediate authority from Continental roots in eastern England rather than from its British Christian predecessors.[45] The imposition and conversion of these ruling families invariably involved the authorisation within their cultural communities of a new set of religious understandings, mediated through adaptation of existing religious and social norms.

The attachment of Arilda's name to the well focuses on the transformation of authoritative social and spiritual meanings in a quite different social context. Matching Arilda's apparent anonymity at Gloucester – her stained-glass image

bears no crown or instrument of martyrdom – her tradition at Oldbury-on-Severn employs motifs typical of 'popular religion' as distinguised by Julia Smith and others from 'clerical tradition': beheading at a well, or causing a well to spring, and the agency of animals.[46] Similar regional cults are Walstan's in East Anglia, Kenelm's in the West Midlands, and those of Sidwell/Urith/Juthwara in Devon and Dorset.[47] However, attachment of Arilda's authority could have arisen from communal, popular interest in surviving use of the Kington well for medicinal purposes and/or divination in the later middle ages and after the Reformation. It would also fit other probable cases of a communal transfer of supernatural authority to landscape features in the wake of local saints' disappearance or ejection from the buildings of the Christian church. Another view of 'holy' wells is that they represent a demonstration of the church's power to impose new understandings on ancient ritual sites. Alternatively, it has been argued that some, at least, represented authorisation via a 'popular' set of beliefs in opposition to the authority of the parish church. Long after Arilda's disappearance from Gloucester she was still celebrated by Thornbury's Anglicans and the villagers of Oldbury-on-Severn in general. The authority of the local community persisted.

EDWARD, KING AND MARTYR, AT STOW

Wulfric Ripa's body 'could not rest in its burial place at Glastonbury until it had been thrown into *Fearningamere*'.[48] This, according to Glastonbury's religious community, was divine authority's vengeance on the magnate who had stolen (or in his eyes, perhaps, had repossessed) a hide of land at Stow-on-the-Wold from another such community, the monks of Evesham. So the story of the cult of St Edward at Stow is doubly about authority, and specifically its usurpation, as committed by Wulfric and earlier by the assassins of the king. Supernatural authority is represented as aiding the church in its communal defence against the power of English magnates and their households. Moral authority pervades the cult of the martyred Edward.

The parish church of Stow-on-the-Wold has long been understood to be under the patronage of Edward the Confessor, the feast of whose translation in 1163, October 13, was date of a fair at Stow instituted in 1476.[49] However, the town was already known as Edwardstow within 20 years of the Confessor's death, well before his cult first appears to have been promoted. In 1086 Evesham abbey held eight hides there, plus a ninth 'near St Edward's church; King Aethelred [II, 'the Unready'] gave it, exempt [from geld]'.[50] It is much more likely that the dedication was then in honour of the earlier Edward, predecessor and half-brother to Aethelred, assassinated at Corfe in Dorset in 979, and regarded as a saint within a year of his death.[51] The earlier Edward's sanctification was promoted by protagonists in the struggles around the royal

authority at court which led to the king's death, though it is not clear whether the intention was to foster mediation, compromise and reconciliation, to reassert one party's claims over another, or to offer reparation.[52] One of the leading magnates of Edward's reign was ealdorman Aethelmaer, and tradition at Stow had it that an Aethelmaer was the founder of the hospital of Holy Trinity, with which was associated a chantry in the parish church.[53] One of the witnesses of Aethelred's charter to Evesham was archbishop Dunstan, abbot at Glastonbury until 960, who had Edward's remains translated to Shaftesbury, also subsequently known as 'Edwardstow'. Crucially, in regard to the story of Wulfric's deposition into *Fearningamere*', it is surely no coincidence that Edward's body was found, after his murder, thrown in a swamp.

As part of the process of restitution, the negotiation of royal and aristocratic authority, and the defence of the church's authority and assets against repossessions by noble founders' descendents, the clerics apparently persuaded Aethelred to restore the hide at Stow-on-the-Wold to the monks of Evesham, and Edward king and martyr was chosen as the titular. But there was additional significance in the choice of Edward, because of the proximity of a royal hall. Though Stow was a possession of the church of Evesham, secular power in the district resided at two neighbouring and probably associated royal estate centres. Aethelred signed writs at Slaughter, but the king's hall may have been at Swell, where Bowl Farm, within half a mile of Stow, preserves an example of Old English *bothl*, which can denote a royal palace.[54] It is inconceivable that Evesham's decision to honour Aethelred's step-brother, as a result of whose murder Aethelred wore the crown, was a matter of chance.[55] It was a reminder to him that his own authority rested to a large degree on the favourable authority of the church, sanctioned in turn by the supernatural authority of his martyred predecessor.

The cult of Edward, king and martyr was planted at Stow by an aristocratic party in contention for influence over royal authority, working through, and aided by, confederates in the church, or possibly vice-versa. The community of Evesham abbey (and so also the staff of its dependent church at Stow) recovered their land, but the *quid pro quo* may have been the expulsion of the existing patron saint. The community of families in contention with the monasteries over past gifts was the same 'community' or 'communities' of the powerful who were in contention with each other over the government of England. Thus it may be possible to see at Stow, in its cult of Edward King and Martyr, early beginnings of a civil society – a balanced, creative tension between secular and religious forces armed with sets of interests and eager to impose their authority.

The local community was not absent from this interplay, however. As with Arilda, it adopted Edward as the patron of its own 'holy' well - and conceivably substituted him in the place of another, truly local saint. Later uncertainty over the identity of Stow's patron is compounded by antiquarian suggestions that the

dedication commemorated a hermit, Edwald, associated with a well half a mile south of the church.[56] Stow's name, normally denoting a place of assembly or pilgrimage, could well point to some earlier cult than Edward's. Stow stands within the probable perimeter of an Iron Age hill-fort, a typical location for a mid-Saxon monastery - as with the Hwiccian houses of Hanbury and Tetbury, for example. By analogy with dependencies of Worcester, such a monastery might have been absorbed by Evesham.[57] The enclosure's name was Maugersbury. This not only suggests reuse of the hill-fort but also hints at mid- to late-Anglo-Saxon assemblies for the exercise of royal and/or communal authority, since the literal etymology of Maethelgar is 'council-spear'.[58] As at Shaftesbury, therefore, Edward's cult may have replaced a predecessor – Aethelred's charter, after all, was a restitution.

The well's users were not only local people. Situated on the Fosse Way, it had served the needs of travellers, too, for many generations. Pre-Christian religious activity at Stow may be indicated by the discovery of a Romano-British carved figure.[59] Thus its story extends beyond the aristocratic and clerical communities of the tenth and early eleventh centuries and their contest and mediation of authority. It is also about the community of the town; the community of the rural settlement that preceded it; the community of travellers and others using the well; the community of the royal household serving the hall at Lower Swell; and in the dim historical distance, perhaps a community of a small religious house or hermitage.

CONCLUSION

It should now be possible to say something about the nature and processes of both 'authority' and 'community' as exemplified by, or in respect of these cults. To do so requires a recapitulation of the two concepts and how they might interact. It is then necessary to consider the cults' common and disparate features in simple, concrete terms: the who, what and why, where and when, and how. Very broadly, authority can mean the agreed or assumed right to carry out executive functions in respect of given sets of common objectives. Alternatively it can mean the legitimacy conferred on a given set of understandings and/or norms. Community likewise has more than one meanings: it may indicate, for example, a shared set of interests and/or objectives, mainly social or economic and thus tending to the material; or a shared set of ideas, mainly cultural and thus encompassing the spiritual. Problems for the student of religious cults arise from a number of consequent questions: how far authority of the second sort is a construct in support of the first or in support of a challenge to the first; how often the two kinds of community clash and how often coincide; and to what extent one or other kind of community tends to harness one or other category of

authority, and conversely whether authority of either sort controls and shapes either type of community.

No episcopal canonisation is known for any of these cults, but bishops as well as abbots colluded in their promotion even when not actively engaged in it themselves. In this sense the authority and authorisation was top-down and it is difficult to sort out the shared ideas from the shared interests. At the other, broader end of the social hierarchy, the attachment of saints to wells looks like the people-at-large at work and was at least partly a post-Reformation phenomenon, a reaction to the ejection of the saints from their churches. Association of Antony's wells with livestock protection may be an exception to this. The defence of the Kinley chapel's concealed lands, on the other hand, represents a very clear clash of post-Reformation communities, local and national, with their own agendas and each claiming its own legitimacy.

Antony's veneration similarly seems anomalous when it is asked what was at stake in the promotion of these three cults, and what were the symbols of authority. The issues in the cases of Edward and Arilda were clear enough: protection of the common weal from regicide, and of moral precepts (and by extension the church which taught them) from the depraved. Both have parallels: for Edward read Edmund, for example, and for Arilda read Pandwynna of Eltisley.[60] At the same time, other, dynastic issues may have functioned as available sub-texts. In addition, monastic prestige was at stake and was well served by promoting such cults, particularly in the light of the monks' dependence on patronage. It is worth noting here the extent to which Gloucester relied on its royal connections, potentially the most powerful of secular authorities, and Evesham on links with the nobility. Alongside these social issues, the management of livestock and trade and the provision of health therapies do seem of a different character, and Antony himself stands out by virtue of his 'white' eremitic martyrdom as opposed to the 'red' martyrdom of Edward and (supposedly) of Arilda.[61] Possibly Antony's veneration was an attempt to harness pre-existing concerns of the agrarian community. Not that the other cults are empty of such resonance: consider Edward as possible supplanter of an 'Edwald' and the association of Arilda's church site with a miraculous cow.

The secular breaks in again when consideration is given to the time and place of these cults' promotion. The chronology is different: Edward's cult appearing from *c.* 980, Arilda's recorded in her translation, probably around 1080, and with the *oratio* in her honour written *c.* 1220. By 1250, Edward's cult was in decline at Stow and Arilda's probably did not survive the Reformation. Antony's veneration at Kinley, on the other hand, does not appear there until *c.* 1200 and survived in popular memory well into the seventeenth century. The commonality between all three lies in their locality. All three were venerated at places with a history of royal ownership, with markets, and with Iron Age

antecedents. Indeed, all three characteristics may be joined by some common but by now invisible thread.

Conceivably that thread connects with the Christianisation of sacred sites, one of the themes common to all three cults and itself a matter of authority and community. Particularly prominent are healing places, both formal as at Uley, and informal, as with the wells. A reassessment may be required of the historiography of an imposed Christianity, coloured by accounts of 'pagan' shrines overthrown by force. For 'pagan' we might read 'non-conformity with established state religion and challenge to its authority'. Equally plausible is the perception of an essentially peaceful process by which the saints' authority was employed by religious communities to persuade other, secular and local communities to adopt a Christian perspective in their continuing use of the sacred, and particularly the healing places most immediately available to them. The British entity which the Hwicce came to rule was a Christian-led society, but the early church was not concerned to appropriate rites which did not involve the invocation of divinities. Only in the latter circumstance was the church's authority challenged, by appeal to some other supernatural authority, and intervention provoked.

Is it possible to illustrate from these cults the way in which authority works – how it is imposed, mediated and negotiated, sustained, challenged and overturned? A claim to a holy body is a powerful aid to the imposition and sustaining of authority, even if described in terms of the saint choosing his or her resting place. Reporting of miracles, writing of hagiography and liturgical texts, focusing of the cult on a centre of population from which tales of healing and wonder may go forth: all these ought to have strengthened the hands of those in whom the saint's relics resided. Provision of services, spiritual and material, has always been an important tool in sustaining religious authority, and therapeutic services stand out as particularly effective in the written and art historical record of the middle ages. Where there was a need to mediate or negotiate religious authority, it was handy to be able to refer to 'higher', supernatural authority, whether represented by tomb, image, or altar. Every supplication, every pilgrim's badge, every ex-voto made it easier for a community of guardians of belief to win hearts among the community of believers.

Conversely, the work got harder once fewer devotees thought themselves well served. 'The people have grown cold towards St Barbara's head,' complained the abbot of Hales Owen in 1343.[62] Leland could find no shrine of Arilda; Edward King and Martyr had given way to his namesake by c. 1300. Indifference was as potent a weapon as any when it came to challenging, and overturning, religious authority which rested to any degree on relics. It may well be significant that the cult which lasted longest was the one tied locally not to relics or martyrdom, but to a notable, perhaps miraculous image. Further, it may be possible to interpret the attachment of the names of Arilda and Edward to 'holy'

wells as a means by which clerical authority could be challenged or at least by-passed. It looks very much like an appropriation of the sacred by local communities less concerned with 'official' religion as represented by clerical and monastic communities as with therapy and divination. The first was authorised by the organs of church and state; the second by neighbourly custom and practice. Pandwynna, the Cambridgeshire saint who shares characteristics with Arilda, continued to be commemorated through her well after her altar had been obliterated, despite violent action by the parson. In Gloucestershire, too, saints were stripped from their altars, but their names stuck because their wells continued to flow.

In summary, religious authority appears to flow from community, and community of ideas appears to flow from community of interest. Someone has to propose the legitimisation of a set of understandings, or to point to reasons for conferring legitimacy. Their reasons for doing so may be altruistic or selfish. To be successful they must appeal to common attitudes and instincts, in the light of common needs and wants. What was wanted in the middle ages that the cult of saints could supply? Individuals will sign up to ideas and practices which they think are in their interest, and with which they can cope, mentally and psychologically. What they believe is happening around them, seen or unseen, must be within the scope of their imagination but it flows essentially from their needs and is fuelled by emotion. The extent to which the processes of authority and community discussed in this paper are expressed emotionally may give a clue to the need to achieve both authorisation and communality. Communal responses are easily aroused, but they are also fickle. Whether from fashion or failed expectations, loyalties could switch from one saint to another. Yet some cults were robust and resilient, and some mental impulses were constant, whether at work in the Christianisation at Uley or in the Reformation in the neighbourhood a thousand years later. To discover what made the difference will help the investigator intent on reconstructing individual cults. It also promises, by focusing on such issues as authority and community, insights into the social psychology of medieval Europe as a whole.

Notes

1 The following abbreviations are used:

DB Glos.:   *Domesday Book, 15, Gloucestershire*, ed. John S. Moore (Chichester, Phillimore, 1982).

EPNS Glos.:   A. H.Smith, *The Place-names of Gloucestershire*, Parts 1-4, English Place-Name Society, Vols 38-41 (for Years 1961-2 to 1963-4) (Cambridge, University Press, 1964-5).

[T]BGAS: [*Transactions of the*] *Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*.

TASC: *Trans-national Database and Atlas of Saints' Cults*

VCH Glos.:   *The Victoria History of the County of Gloucester,* 11 vols (University of London, Institute of Historical Research, 1907-99).

2 P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (London, 1981); B. Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind* (1982); P. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, repr. 1990).

3 G. Grimshaw, *Essays in Early Roman Liturgy*, Alcuin Club Collections 46 (London, S.P.C.K., 1964); A. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, tr. J. Birrell (Cambridge, 1997); *The Golden Legend: Readings on the saints, by Jacobus de Voragine*, tr. W. G. Ryan (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2 vols, 1993); *Butler's Lives of the Saints* (new full edition, revised, Tunbridge Wells, Burns & Oates, 12 vols, 1995-).

4 R. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, repr. with new introduction 1995); E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (Yale, New Haven and London, 1992); K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century England* (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, repr. 1997).

5 S. Wilson, ed., *Saints and Their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983); W. A. Christian, *Person and God in a Spanish Valley* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989); J. Rattue, *The Living Stream: Holy Wells in Historical Context* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1995); F. Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Church Dedications, or England's Patron Saints* (3 vols, 1899), now being replaced by the National Atlas and Database of Saints' Cults (see Footnote 6, below); R. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A history of the ritual year in Britain* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996).

6 *TASC Newsletter*, 1 (January 1999) (ISSN 1465-6272, University of Leicester, Department of English Local History).

7 Gloucestershire was chosen because the paper on which this chapter is based was given at a conference at Bristol University. I am grateful to the conference organisers at the Centre for Medieval Studies, some of whom also edited this book, for their encouragement and patience; to my colleagues at the Department of English Local History at Leicester University for many helpful discussions; and to the Leverhulme and Aurelius Trusts for awarding me the research fellowship during which the paper was revised. I would especially like to thank Ken Smith for drawing the maps.

8 Gloucestershire Record Office, D340a/T92, Exchequer Inquiry, 28 Elizabeth (1586).

9 R. Parsons, 'A Parochial Visitation of the Diocese of Gloucester' (Bodleian Library, MS. Rawl/B.323), p. 242. Parsons amassed two volumes of notes between 1670 and 1690, of which the first has vanished. Microfilm copy at Gloucestershire Record Office, MF 336.

10 C. Dyer, 'The English medieval village community and its decline', *Journal of British Studies,* 33, No. 4, 'Vill, Guild, and Gentry: Forces of Community in Later Medieval England' (October 1994), pp. 407-30.

11 *Domesday Book. 15, Gloucestershire*, ed. and tr. J. S. Moore, (Chichester, Phillimore, 1982), 10,2. *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae*, ed. W. H. Hart, Rolls Series 33 (3 vols, Rolls Society, 1863-7), i (1867), p. 101, and i, p. 12.

12 *Ibid*, i, p. 102, and ii, pp. 42-3.

13 'Nympsfield' in R. Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Glostershire*, with a new introduction by B. S. Smith (London, W. Bowyer, 1712; facsimile edn, East Ardsley, E.P. Publishing, in collaboration with Gloucestershire County Library, 1974), and in Samuel Rudder, *A New History of Gloucestershire* (Cirencester, S. Rudder, 1779).

14 Parsons, 'A Parochial Visitation', p. 242.

15 Gloucestershire Record Office Q/SO3 (Quarter Sessions Order Book 3), Epiphany Sessions, 8 Anne, 1708/9, p. 323.

16 Atkyns and Rudder, see Footnote 8. J. Silvester, *The Parish Church of Nympsfield* [etc.] (London, Phillimore, 1898).

17 R. Graham, 'The Order of Saint-Antoine de Viennois and its English Commandery', *Archaeological Journal* lxxiv (1927), pp. 341-406.

18 R. Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* [etc.] (London, 1584; ed. B. Nicholson, London, E. Stock, 1886), ch. xxiv, cited in K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (London, Weidenfield and Nicolson, reprinted 1997), p. 27. R. Day, *A Booke of Christian Prayers* [etc.] (Iohn Daye: London, 1578), sigs. Ggij(v)-Ggiii, cited in Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 639. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the reign of Henry VIII* [etc.] (23 vols, J. S. Brewer *et al.* (eds.), 1862-1932), XIII, pt. 1, No. 1199, cited in Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 405. Graham, 'St Antoine', p. 362.

19 B. Cunliffe, *Hengistbury Head* (London, Paul Elek, 1978), pp. 63-81, especially p. 79; *Armorica and Britain: Cross-Channel relationships in the Late First Millenium BC*, B. Cunliffe and P. de Jersey (eds), Studies in Celtic Coinage 3 (Oxford, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1997), pp. 53-54.

20 R. C. Skyring Walters, *The Ancient Wells, Springs, and Holy Wells of Gloucestershire, Their Legends, History and Topography* (Bristol, St Stephen's Press, 1928), pp. 75-80, and see Note 23 below.

21 At Hereford, Malmesbury, Calne, Wilton, Romsey and Wimborne: see R. M. Clay, *The Mediaeval Hospitals of England* (London, Methuen & Co., 1909).

22 Graham, 'Sainte-Antoine'.

23 Adjacent to the Devizes spring mentioned earlier, Mother Antony's Well (OS grid reference 999642), is the site of a Roman building previously interpreted as a villa but now provisionally interpreted by the archaeologist Alison Borthwick as having religious features. I am grateful to Katy Jordan of Bath University for this information.

24 *EPNS Glos.*, ii, p. 243.

25 A. Woodward and P. Leach, *The Uley Shrines. Excavation of a ritual complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire, 1977-9* (Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission Monograph, 1993), pp. 63-79.

26 M. Henig, 'Votive objects: images and inscriptions', in Woodward and Leach, *Uley*, pp. 88-112.

27 N. M. Herbert has cited similar apparently careful treatment of statue heads at the fana of Le Trembloi near Châtillon-sur-Seine and Montmartre d'Avallon (review of 'Woodward and Leach' in TBGAS, 112 (1994), pp. 721-2).

28 The form of the name employed here is from local usage, though it was recorded by John Leland as 'Arild' (Leland's Itinerary in England in or about the Years 1535-1543, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith (5 vols, London, George Bell & Sons, 1906-10, reprinted London, Centaur Press, 1964), vol. 5, p. 156 [folio 681]). Earlier it had been latinised as 'Arildis'; and its likely Old English form was different again (see the discussion later in this section).

29 Verses by Abbot William Malverne appear in Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle, ed. T. Hearne (2 vols, Oxford, 1724), vol. 2, pp. 578-85. The words quoted are those of Leland, who saw inscriptions on the wall of the north aisle of the abbey; Leland's Itinerary, vol. 5, p. 156; vol. 2, p. 59).

30 Leland appears to suggest that the translation took place in the Norman period; Leland's Itinerary, vol. 2, p. 60. For Matilda's holding, see DB Glos., 163 d (1,47).

31 The Laud Chronicle [E] s.a. 1086 [1087], in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. G. N. Garmonsway (London, Dent, rev. edn 1960).

32 DB Glos., 163 d (1,47) refers to its pre-Conquest possession by Beorhtric son of Aelfgar, whose caput was Tewkesbury. An argument can be made for Beorhtric's descent from the rulers of the Hwicce. Hwiccian, and later Mercian ealdormen held Deerhurst, which with Tewkesbury probably represented the divisions of a major royal estate (G. R. Jones, 'Church dedications and landed units of lordship and administration in the Pre-Reformation diocese of Worcester', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 1996, p. 53). Thornbury town lay in Kington tything, one of three into which the manor was divided (Ralph Bigland. Historical, Monumental and Genealogical Collections, Relative to the County of Gloucester, ed. B. Frith, Gloucestershire Record Series 5 (BGAS 1992), 3, p. 1295). Kington's name, though recorded only from the thirteenth century (EPNS Glos., iii, p. 15), is likely to indicate a much earlier royal ownership.

33 The Continuator of Wace, in E .A. Freeman, The History of the Norman Conquest of England (6 vols, Oxford, 1867-79), iv, App. Note.

34 M. Hare, The Two Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Gloucester, Deerhurst Lecture 1992 (Gloucester, Friends of Deerhurst Church, 1993), p. 11. G. McN. Rushforth, 'The stained glass of the Lady Chapel of Gloucester Cathedral', TBGAS, 43 (1921). D. Welander, The History, Art and Architecture of Gloucester Cathedral (Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1991), App. 8, pp 464-5. R. H. D. Short, 'Graffiti on the reredos of the Lady Chapel of Gloucester Cathedral,' TBGAS, 67 (1946-8), pp. 21-3, 35.

35 Hereford Cathedral Library, MS, O.i.2. I am grateful to Herr Otfried Lieberknecht, University of Berlin, and Dr Bill East, University of Leeds, for their assistance and advice on the text and interpretation of the oratio and collect. Leland's Itinerary, vol. 2, p. 60 (folio 70 bis b.).

36 It is possible that only part of her remains were translated. The oratio refers to a relic, singular, though this could refer to her body.

37 It was a free, that is, extra-parochial chapel.

38 Ralph Bigland, iii, p. 1295.

39 Oldbury-on-the-Hill passed by royal or noble gift to Pershore Abbey by the tenth century (P. H. Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, An Annotated List and Bibliography, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks 8, 1968), No. 786).

40 See, for example, L. Wilshire, Berkeley Vale and Severn Shore (2nd edn, London, Hale, 1980), pp. 93-95; and J. Bradshaw, 'St Arilda of Oldbury on Severn, Gloucestershire', Source, the Holy Wells Journal, new series 5 (Spring 1998), pp. 12-13, together with H. Hughes and P. Read (1998), 'St Arild's Hymn', in the same issue, pp. 14-15. Compare folktales in H. E. Davidson, 'Otherworld Cows', At the Edge, 1 (1996), published electronically at http://www.gmtnet.co.uk/indigo/edge/ocattle.htm.

41 OS grid reference 651888.

42 Jones, 'Dedications', p. 67.

43 Beorhtric was son of Aelfgar (DB Glos., 1,39). Ann Williams encourages consideration of a Wessex origin for Beorhtric (personal comment). However, compare Aelfgar's names with those of Hwiccian ealdormen and Beorhtric's neighbour at Deerhurst, Earl Aethelwine, otherwise Odda; also discussion of a Mercian 'B' family, allied with Wessex by marriage, by Davis Rollason, The Search for St Wigstan: Prince-Martyr of the Kingdom of Mercia, ed. D. Parsons, Vaughan Paper 27 (University of Leicester, 1981).

44 For ritual roles of heads of chieftainly households in north-west Europe, see, for example, I. Holand, 'Vessel import to Norway in the first millennium A.D. Composition and context' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University College London, Institute of Archaeology, 1966).

45 For surviving British Christianity in the West Midlands see recent studies by Steven Bassett, particularly '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), pp. 13-40. For a possible Bernician origin of the Hwiccian rulers see H. P. R. Finberg, Early Charters of the West Midlands (Leicester, 1972), pp. 167-80. For onomastic evidence of British cultural influence, see G. R .Jones, 'Penda's footprint? Place-names containing personal names associated with early Mercian kings', Nomina 21 (1999).

46 J. M. H.Smith, 'Oral and written: Saints, miracles and relics in Brittany, c.850-1250,' Speculum 65 (1990), pp. 326-343.

47 M. Gill, 'The saint with a scythe: a previously unidentified wall painting in the church of St Andrew, Cavenham', Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology, 37 (1995), pp. 245-54, and 'Kenelm cunebearn... haudes bereafed: a reconstructed cycle of wall paintings from St Kenelm's Chapel, Romsley', Journal of the British Archaeological Association, 149 (1996), pp. 23-36. M. J. Swanton, St Sidwell: An Exeter Legend (Newton Abbot, Devon Books, for Devon County Council, 1986).

48 Sawyer, 'Charters', No. 935 (British Library, Harley MS 3763, fo.62v (s.xii); J. M. Kemble, Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici (6 vols, London, English Historical Society, 1839-48), No. 723; Finberg, Early Charters, No. 150 (p. 67).

49 For example, F. Arnold-Forster, Studies in English Church Dedications (3 vols, London, Skeffington and Son, 1899), III, p. 269, following the fair day, for which see VCH Glos., ed. C. R. Elrington (1965), 6, p. 157; Ralph Bigland, p. 195.

50 DB Glos., 12,1.

51 DB Glos., 12,1.

52 The political events surrounding the cult are discussed in S. Keynes, The Diplomas of King Aethelred 'The Unready': A Study in Their Use as Historical Evidence (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.163-174; D. Rollason, Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 142-4; and C. Fell, 'Edward, king and martyr and the Anglo-Saxon hagiographic tradition' in D. Hill (ed.), Ethelred the Unready: papers from the Millenary Conference, Brit. Archaeol. Reports (1978), p. 59.

53 Ralph Bigland, iii, p.1196, citing John Speed, The history of Great Britaine under the conquests of ye Romans, Saxons, Danes and Normans... from Julius Caesar to our most gracious soveraigne King James (London, H. Hall and J. Beale, for J. Sudbury and G. Humble, 1611); and J. Tanner, Notitia Monastica: or an account of all the abbies, priories and houses of friers, heretofore in England and Wales and also of all the colleges and hospitals founded before A.D. 1540 ([1744] Cambridge, University Press, 1787). C. R. Elrington believed the story of Aethelmaer's hospital confused the Gloucestershire Stow with Stow in Lincolnshire, which had links with Eynsham Abbey, one of Aethelmaer's foundations (VCH Glos., 6 (1965), p. 159). I cannot locate a reference to Stow, Lincolnshire, in Toulmin Smith's edition of Leland, whereas Leland's original MS account of Stow, Gloucestershire, is missing (Leland's Itinerary, vol. 3, p. 38). Bigland's citation (Ralph Bigland, p. 1189) of an assertion by Leland that Stow-on-the-Wold church was built by Aethelmaer 'near St Edward's well' suggests he had seen a copy.

54 A. H. Smith, Elements in Old English Place-Names, ii (English Place-Name Society, vol. 25), p. 43.

55 A conclusion arrived at by Harold Finberg, Gloucestershire Studies (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1957), pp. 64-5.

56 Bigland, iii, p. 1195. EPNS Glos., i, p. 223, citing the 1766 Enclosure Act.

57 Elrington, VCH Glos. 6, p. 144.

58 Spear-shaking signified approval (as at wapen['weapon']take assemblies). Interpretation of Maethelgar as a personal name presents problems (EPNS Glos., i, p. 222).

59 The primitive figure of Mars, perhaps part of a votive altar, is now in ther Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Gloucestershire County Council, Sites and Monuments Record, Area 2711).

60 For Edmund see D. H. Farmer, The Oxford Dictionary of Saints, 3rd edn (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 147-8. For Pandwynna see Leland's Itinerary, 5, p. 218.

61 The phrase 'white martyrdom' refers to withdrawal from the world in contrast to loss of life in 'red martyrdom'.

62 The Victoria History of the County of Worcestershire, eds J. W. Willis-Bund and H. A. Doubleday, 5 vols (London, A. Constable & Co., 1901-26), vol. 2, ed. J. W. Willis-Bund and William Page (1906), p. 163.