

Tintinhull's origin? A scenario.

Draft working document. References to follow.

The Saxon Origins and Evolution of Tintinhull: An Archaeological and Historical Synthesis

The historical record of Tintinhull in Somerset is a study of early medieval settlement and development in the West Country. In the 9th C it was a part of a vast royal and ecclesiastical network. To understand the village's Saxon origins is to unravel a complex tapestry of territorial subdivision beginning with the westward expansion of the Kingdom of Wessex the establishment of the minster church system and the subsequent consolidation of manorial authority under the patronage of Glastonbury Abbey. Tintinhull emerged during the Saxon period firstly as a farming community and later as a central administrative hub for a namesake Hundred .

Tintinhull's name is generally accepted as bridging the gap between the post-Roman Brittonic inhabitants and the Saxon settlers. Etymological analysis suggested a hybrid construction reflecting the site's physical occupation. The modern name Tintinhull likely combining elements signifying both defence and topography. The initial "Tin" originating from Primitive Welsh, "din" meaning fort or fortified place, while "hull" came from Old English "hyll" for hill or natural elevation.

The synthesis of these terms suggests that the early Saxons encountered a landscape already characterised by existing fortifications, likely associated with the nearby Iron Age and Roman activity at Ham Hill, and integrated their own Germanic descriptors into the local nomenclature. The survival of the Brittonic *din* in a region otherwise heavily Germanicised by the 9th century indicating a period of cohabitation or at the very least a functional recognition of British landmarks by Saxon pioneers as they pushed the borders of Wessex further west.

However, our examination of early documentary forms of the name provides a chronological map of wholly Saxon spellings . In the 10th century the parish was identified amongst others as Tutanhulle a spelling that likely captures the late Saxon pronunciation before the linguistic disruptions of the Norman Conquest. By 1086 the Domesday scribes recorded the manor as Tintenella a Latinised variant reflecting the administrative oversight of the new Norman elite yet the underlying Saxon roots remained recognisable. This continuity of naming suggests that while the upper echelons of lordship changed the local identity and the descriptive markers used by the agricultural community were deeply entrenched by the time of King Edward the Confessor.

NB As mentioned elsewhere (ref...) the spelling Titinhull could quite likely be a later clerical error where a scribe missed the bar (the line over a letter indicating an "n"). If, for example, a monk was copying Tinianhulle and missed the mark it would easily be misread as Tiahulle or Titinhulle.

The Minster Matrix: Tintinhull in the Yeovil Parish (Why Tintinhull became important?)

A critical component of Tintinhull's Saxon identity is its role within the "Minster System": The ecclesiastical organisation, predating the modern parish structure. Research by Brian and Moira Gittos, (ref...) particularly their analysis of the 'Yeovil Minster' and its daughter churches, identifies Tintinhull as a primary daughter church.

The Yeovil Minster, centred on what is now St John the Baptist's, likely dates back to the 8th century and served as the mother church for a wide territory. As a daughter church, Tintinhull would have been subordinate to the Yeovil Minster for burial rights and certain tithes during the

early and middle Saxon periods. This relationship would underscore Tintinhull's status as part of a larger, coherent socio-religious unit before the fragmentation into independent parishes in the 11th and 12th centuries. The Gittos map (fig 1 below) illustrates that Tintinhull's territory shared boundaries with other daughter churches such as Kingston, Preston and Sock Dennis, creating a contiguous zone of Saxon pastoral care and administrative oversight. The geographical relationship between these churches was not accidental.

The map shows Tintinhull situated in the northwestern quadrant of the Yeovil Minster parish, positioned between the royal manor of Kingston and the Roman road network. This positioned Tintinhull to serve as a bridge between the high-status royal estates and its agricultural hinterlands. The ecclesiastical link to Yeovil was also reflected in the secular realm, as much of the land in Tintinhull was likely carved out of the massive royal estate centred on Yeovil.

The formal history of Tintinhull is inextricably linked to the highest levels of the Wessex monarchy. The village and its surroundings were part of the personal holdings of the Royal Family of Wessex a fact confirmed by the will of King Alfred the Great in 899 AD

In his will, Alfred mentions an estate at Givelea (Yeovil) which he bequeathed to his eldest son Æthelweard. This estate included the manor of Kingston the 'king's tun' which served as the administrative core for the region. The presence of the 'Hundred Stone' within the Kingston manor at the junction of modern-day Stone Lane and Mudford Road is a vital link to this royal past. The stone marked the traditional meeting place of the Hundred Court where the King's representatives would gather to oversee legal disputes and organise the military defence of the shire. Tintinhull's eventual elevated status as the head of its own namesake Hundred suggests a rise in importance during the 10th century possibly as a result of the reorganisation of royal lands under King Edgar.

The transition from a dependent royal territory to a consolidated manor involved the granting of land to loyal thegns (ministers). Two lost charters from the Glastonbury Abbey archives reveal the mechanism of a transfer. Around 943 AD King Edmund granted 10 hides in Tintinhull to a minister named Wulfric. A later grant, dated between 959 and 975 AD, saw the land pass to Aelfswith the wife of Ealdorman Aelfheah of Hampshire who eventually bequeathed the estate to Glastonbury Abbey ensuring that Tintinhull remained under ecclesiastical lordship until the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

The Administrative Architecture of the Tintinhull Hundred

By the late 10th century the administrative framework of Saxon England had coalesced into a system of Shires and Hundreds. Tintinhull occupied a position of significant authority as the headquarters of the Tintinhull Hundred. Each Hundred had its own fyrd a local defence force and a court responsible for the maintenance of the frankpledge system, a collective responsibility for law and order. The Tintinhull Court Rolls mention its frankpledge (ref Tintinhull Local History Group archive)

Hundred courts often met in the open at a significant topographical landmark. While the Stone Hundred met at the 'Hundred Stone' in Yeovil the Tintinhull Hundred was likely centred on the village itself indicating that Tintinhull had achieved sufficient stature to host these essential regional gatherings.

This administrative prominence explains why the Domesday Book of 1086 records Tintinhull with such detail. (Ref is it true?) It was not merely a manor but a governmental node that had functioned as such for over a century before the arrival of the Normans.

The early Saxon settlement and emergence of the nucleated settlement.

While documentary evidence focuses on the 10th-century consolidation of Tintinhull, archaeological discoveries suggest an even earlier Saxon presence. (Ref . Tintinhull Local History Group surveys and Archeological watching briefs for new builds).

The most significant of these is the presence of a deserted part of the village in close proximity to the church and the existence of Saxon field names which indicate the dispersed Saxon farms that existed before the village itself. The 6th or 7th century were the earliest phases of Saxon settlement in Somerset, so it is possible that the fertile lands of Bearley, Huish and Worthy were so named by that time. Such evidence refines our understanding of the village's origin.

Rather than appearing as a fully-formed nucleated settlement in the 10th century, Tintinhull likely began as a series of dispersed farmsteads. Names such as 'Worthy' (enclosure) and 'Huish' (household or hide) preserve the memory of these early family-based holdings. The transition to a nucleated village occurred later with the establishment of a Saxon church or Chapel. (See below)

Spatial Organisation: The “Saxon Green” and Nucleated Settlement

The physical layout of Tintinhull today still mirrors its Saxon origins. The village is characterised by a “nucleated” structure, which likely replaced earlier dispersed homesteads in the 10th century.

This article suggests that the central feature of this *nucleation* is the area now known as the Recreation Ground and historically as the Great Orchard. For the purpose of this study we regard it as a ‘Saxon Green’ (Ref Ellison...), common meadow that served as the communal heart of the village and likely accommodated Church Ales and Tintinhull's 13-day Prescriptive fair (Ref Gazette of Fairs and Markets)...which means it was already long established before the 12c after which royal charters were required.

The identification of this ‘Saxon Green’ is supported by later estate maps such as the John Napper Map of 1788 which identifies ‘The Green’ as a large oval-shaped area. Fig 2 below...In the Saxon period such greens were essential for the management of livestock and as gathering points for the community and possibly the Hundred court. But the presence of a village green of this size is unusual in Somerset where settlements were often more densely packed, further distinguishing Tintinhull as an administrative centre of some importance.(Ref. Ellison...)

The Saxon Church

A circular or oval-shaped field inside a village can be a ‘signature’ of early landscape history. ... In some Saxon-founded villages, the original sacred centre was an oval enclosure .(Ref.Taylor) So, before the 13th century, was the Saxon Green a Church Green and was the Daughter Church to Yeovil's Minster sited there?The field inside that oval was often the “Glebe”—land dedicated to supporting the priest. It would have remained open and unbuilt upon for centuries, which could be why the oval shape is still visibly untouched today while the rest of the village became a grid of houses.

The feature shown in the map of fig 2 is likely identified by what archaeologists call a ‘Relict Enclosure’ or a ‘Proto-Village Nucleus’. (Ref....)

We suggest that **The oval you see today, bordered by the roads, is likely the original Saxon “Tun”.**

The evidence.

The field inside that oval was often the “Glebe”—land dedicated to supporting the priest. It remained open and unbuilt upon for centuries, which is why the oval shape is still visibly untouched today while the rest of the village became a grid of houses.

Ground survey undertaken under the direction of a member of Time Team (ref. Mark Corney) mapped evidence of medieval house platforms and ways linked to adjacent ridge and furrow fields .See insert to the west in fig 2..... In addition an official watching archeological survey for a new build immediately adjoining the surveyed area also discovered evidence of early medieval occupation.(Ref. Survey report) . The whole area is sited in close proximity to the western side of the “Church Field.”and connected to the field by a deep “sunken way” worn down by the traffic of its antiquity .

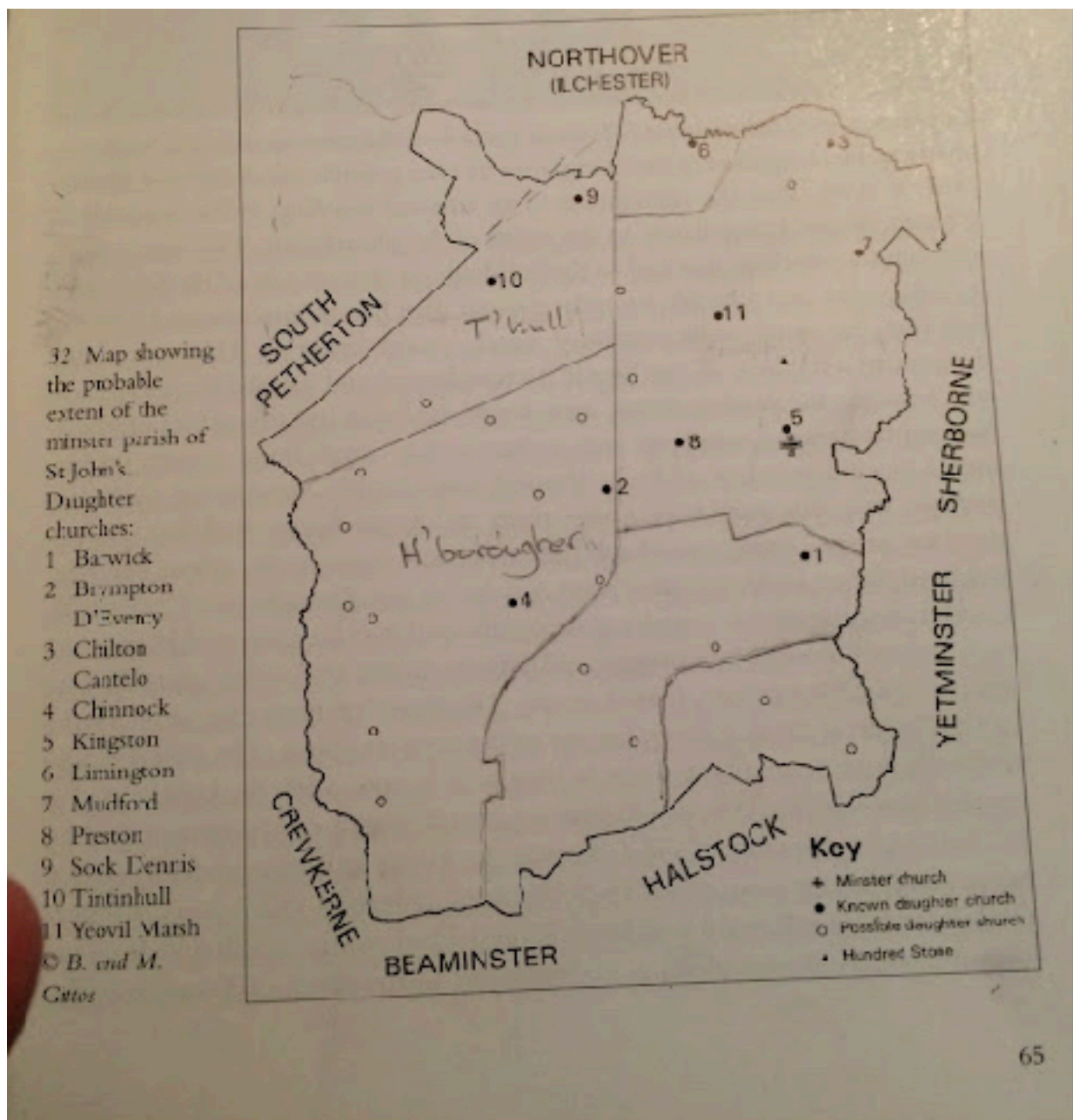


Fig !. The Minster Church of St John's Yeovil and associated daughter Curches and Chapels. Ref Gitos

Ancient minster parish of St John the Baptist
(from Brian and Moira Gittos, who are well-known authorities on the history and
archaeology of the Yeovil area in Somerset)

The map illustrates that Tintinhull was a daughter church of the Saxon Minster of St John the Baptist in Yeovil. It also shows that the 'Parish of Yeovil' was not merely the town but a vast territory where the Rector of Yeovil held significant religious and administrative power.

In the Anglo-Saxon and early medieval periods a Minster (such as St John's in Yeovil) acted as a central 'mother church'. Smaller surrounding settlements, including Tintinhull, had their own chapels or churches but were legally and financially subordinate to the Minster. This meant that for centuries residents of Tintinhull may have been required to pay 'soul-scot' (death duties) to Yeovil and, in the earliest times, were required to be buried in the mother church's cemetery rather than their own village.

The 12th-century church in Tintinhull is dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch. The 'daughter church' designation on the map reflects its older, foundational Saxon links to Yeovil.