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Gloucester and Gloucestershire in Domesday Book

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IN 1072, Serlo, a Norman monk from Mont St Michel, was appointed as abbot of St Peter's, Gloucester. Within a few years, he was deeply involved in the life of the local community. He restored the life of the *Rule* of St Benedict at St Peter's, and he began the building of a splendid new abbey church. The future of his monastery was not left to chance, for he established its fortunes on a firm economic basis. As the abbey developed under its new Norman abbot, so did the borough of Gloucester under its new Norman administrators, and this, in turn, was but part of the extensive settlement of Gloucestershire by a new landowning class. The full effects of all this can best be gauged from the Domesday Survey, which was commissioned at Gloucester at Christmas 1085. If Domesday Book provides a mass of valuable material for the local historian, the careful reconstruction of local history has its own contribution to make to a full understanding of Domesday. Four aspects of this inter-related problem have been examined briefly in this paper: the Domesday Survey itself, the growth of the borough of Gloucester, the Norman settlement in Gloucestershire, and, in particular, the estates held by St Peter's abbey at the end of the 11th century.¹

THE DOMESDAY SURVEY

Gloucester has especially close links with the Domesday Survey, for it was here, at Christmas 1085, that William the Conqueror had deep speech with his magnates about the immediate problems of his kingdom. That 'study in depth' set in motion the Domesday Survey which occupied the royal officials throughout England in 1086. The information then collected was gradually digested to a convenient, though still very bulky, digest in the two volumes of Domesday Book.

The writer of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that at Gloucester 'the king held important deliberations and exhaustive discussions with his council about this land, and how it was peopled, and with what sort of men'. This sense of curiosity brought to the point of action by a strong sense of urgency, provides the motive for the survey. Neither the king nor his barons knew precisely what the resources of the English kingdom might be, nor who controlled them. The conquest was twenty years away. Some of the king's early companions had departed, angry and resentful because their rewards consisted of poor estates. Some big figures had disappeared from the scene, leaving many problems of tenure to be clarified: the earl of Hereford, here in the marches, who fell from power in 1075, and Odo, bishop of Bayeux and earl of Kent, who over-reached himself in 1082. There were many disputed claims to lands all over England, some of which had given rise to great pleas, at which the king or his deputies attempted to do justice amidst much ignorance and uncertainty. Over all there was the greed of king William, whose love for red gold brought him notoriety in his own life-time. With greed, it is true, there went a strong political motive, for in 1085 there was a serious threat to the security of the English kingdom. It came from Scandinavia,

1. This is the text of a lecture given at Gloucester on 29 June 1972, as part of the celebration of the 9th centenary of the appointment of Serlo as abbot of St Peter's, Gloucester, in 1072.

The following abbreviations are used:

D.B., Domesday Book.

Glouc. Cart., *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucesteriae*, ed. W. H. Hart, Rolls Series, 3 vols., 1863-7.

V.C.H., *Victoria History of the Counties of England*.

and in order to meet the threat of invasion king William recruited a large mercenary army. Big armies mean big bills; and William wanted to know, and to know urgently, how those bills were to be paid.

Military danger; the desire to know how the land stood; the need to know its resources; greed; these lay behind the discussions which king and magnates had that Christmas-tide at Gloucester. The result was the Domesday Survey. The country was divided up into circuits, perhaps nine, perhaps only seven, and commissioners were appointed for each circuit. One writer, Robert of Losinga, bishop of Hereford, asserted that their work was checked by a second panel of commissioners, but if this was so, how they worked and how their results were co-ordinated are not known.

We think that the Domesday commissioners sat in the principal town of the shire, or perhaps in a small number of important local centres.² The Gloucestershire historian, C. S. Taylor, writing long before this view had become the accepted orthodoxy, thought that in Gloucestershire the commissioners may have heard evidence at five principal centres, Winchcombe, Cirencester, Gloucester, Bristol and one centre 'west of the Severn'.³ To decide which counties formed a unit visited by one group of Domesday commissioners is sometimes to make an inspired guess. It is thought that Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, and Worcestershire were part of one circuit, with Staffordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire. We know the names of the commissioners who visited Worcestershire, and by implication, Gloucestershire. One was Remigius, bishop of Lincoln, who at some time after 1072 moved the centre of his see from the ancient cathedral church of Dorchester, in Oxfordshire, to the important strategic centre of Lincoln. The west front of that great cathedral church still incorporates part of the church built at Lincoln by Remigius before his death in 1092. He was joined as commissioners for the west midlands by Henry de Ferrars, Walter Giffard, and Adam, brother of Eudes the Steward. We must imagine these men and their clerks sitting regularly in Gloucester, and perhaps elsewhere in the shire, while jurors from each hundred appeared before them. Following the lively reconstruction of Professor V. H. Galbraith, we must also imagine a good deal of activity behind the scenes, as clerks sorted out all the information and documents available, so that they could be presented at formal sessions of the four commissioners.

We know that some tenants-in-chief submitted statements of the lands they held in England, and that these formed part of the evidence used for the Domesday Survey. In Gloucestershire the voice of an individual landholder may, on rare occasions, be heard. Lying beyond the border of the shire was the castellary of Chepstow, and there individual claims were put forward. We learn that 'William of Eu has £9 in Chepstow *as he says*', and that he also challenged the assessment which his neighbours had made of his estate there.⁴ On the other side of the Severn, at Berkeley, we are told that William fitz Osbern had commended two men to the reeve of Berkeley so that he might have their service. The authority for this claim was Roger, the Domesday tenant, explaining how he came to hold the land in question, for Domesday Book qualifies this entry with the words 'so says Roger'.⁵ Entries of this kind are rare.

In general, the authority behind the entries in Domesday Book is 'the men of the shire'. The jurors summoned from each hundred had to vouch for the facts, and in many cases they produced the statement of facts on which the survey was based. This can be demonstrated at length from the Gloucestershire Domesday. At Dymock it was reported that king William held an estate for four years, and afterwards earl William and his son, earl Roger, held it. 'The men of the shire do not know by what means.' At Down Ampney, the Anglo-Saxon magnate who held the estate, Eadnoth, had been given a favourable assessment, so that he paid tax on only two-thirds of the value of the estate 'as the shire says'. King Edward had leased an estate to Aethelwine the sheriff for his life-

2. The best modern account of the whole process is V. H. Galbraith's *The Making of Domesday Book* (Oxford, 1961). His view, now accepted as the orthodox view, differs sharply from the views of an older generation of Domesday scholars.

3. C. S. Taylor, *An Analysis of the Domesday Survey of Gloucestershire* (Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 1889), see especially p. 10.

4. D.B. I, f. 162.

5. *Ibid.*, f. 163.

time, but 'it was not given as a gift as the shire bears witness'. Where they could not speak from precise knowledge, men of the shire might have to make a rough and ready assessment. Rarely, the commissioners had no information about a place. This happened in the case of an estate at Woodchester. Domesday tells us that 'no one from this manor gave any account to the king's commissioners, nor did anyone come to this description'—this *descriptio* as contemporaries called the survey. Two estates for which no one answered were 'valued by the men of the shire at £8'.⁶

By this means a mass of detailed information about the shire was put together. In its original form it was too bulky to be used or stored. We think that a first attempt to reduce this material to more manageable form took place within the circuit, and that a copy of this first digest was sent to Winchester. There, royal clerks carried the process of digesting all these statistics still further, and produced the material in the form in which it is now preserved in volume one of Domesday Book. Only for three eastern counties was the process not completed, and the record for these shires, contained in volume two of Domesday Book, is more detailed and less stereotyped as a result.

GLOUCESTER

Now to turn to the borough of Gloucester:⁷ taking a stand in 1086, and looking at the past and the immediate future, we may set the Domesday account of Gloucester into perspective. Gloucester has the advantage of a continuous history rare in the annals of English boroughs. In the earliest phases of the Roman conquest of Britain, a legionary fortress was established at Kingsholm, and a small civilian settlement grew up between the fortress and the sea. Then in the years 96 to 98 a *colonia* was established at Gloucester where legionaries who had grown old in the service of the empire could settle. This urban settlement continued to flourish from the 2nd to the 5th centuries, and after the Romans had withdrawn from Britain it appears to have survived until the end of the 6th century, until 577. When, at that time, Anglo-Saxon marauders attacked Gloucestershire, the city suffered. The discovery on two sites within the Roman city of many skeletons, not buried but scattered over the whole area, suggests violence and destruction. But it seems likely that the city was never entirely abandoned in those dark centuries which followed the departure of the Romans.

A major landmark in the early history of the borough was the foundation of a monastery for women here in 681, for that implies at least a degree of security. The early history of the house is obscure; not until the refoundation of St Peter's between 823 and 825, this time as a house for secular clerics, does anything approaching a continuous history become possible.⁸

The Danish invasions of the 9th century caused havoc throughout England, and Gloucester, like many other places, experienced the unwelcome visitation of these barbaric raiders. In 877, the Vikings 'pitched their tents in the borough'. The solution to these devastating raids was found partly in the fortification of burhs which provided a defence in depth. One of the most important factors in the growth of Gloucester was that it was fortified by the rulers of the midland kingdom of Mercia early in the 10th century. The borough was then considered to be sufficiently safe to house the remains of St Oswald, and a new minster church was built here for that purpose. The city was much favoured by English rulers in the 10th century, and it may have become the capital of English Mercia. When, between 1042 and 1066, Edward the Confessor, is found residing in his palace at Gloucester, holding major public assemblies here, and enjoying the hunting in the Forest of Dean, it was no sudden new departure. Gloucester was, by its historical development, a major centre.

To determine the extent and topography of Gloucester in the 10th and 11th centuries is far from

6. *Ibid.*, f. 164.

7. In the past I have relied heavily on the essays on the topography of Medieval Gloucester by L. E. W. O. Fullbrook-Leggatt, most conveniently available in his *Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Gloucester* (Gloucester, 1952). This has now been superseded by an essay (which owes much to his work) by M. D. Lobel and J. Tann in *Historic Towns*, 1 (1969). The following paragraphs are based on these two studies.

8. For the history of St Peter's see the *Historia in Glouc. Cart.*, 1, 3-58; *V.C.H. Glos.*, II, 53; for the earliest phases, H. P. R. Finberg, 'The Early History of Gloucester Abbey', *The Early Charters of the West Midlands* (Leicester, 1961), 155-66.

easy, since the boundaries are not clear. The walled area of the Roman city contained an area of 45 acres. It would be surprising if the pre-Conquest city covered as much as 70 or 80. To the south-west, the east, and the north-east, the Roman walls seem to have been the basic line of defence. It may be that to the north and north-west the Roman walls marked the distinction between the borough within its fortifications and the suburbs outside the ramparts. But on this side of Gloucester the river system and extensive marshy ground provided natural defences beyond the walls, and extra-mural development could take place within a safe and protected area. St Oswald's minster, for example, was built well beyond the line of the Roman wall. We must think of open settlement rather than of intensive and heavily built up settlement, for the Saxon borough has been described as 'less compact and more rural in character than the Roman one as well as being less populous than the 12th-century city'.⁹ The earliest Saxon settlements seem to have been to the north and west, with some concentration along the line of the river in what would be called a western suburb. St Peter's abbey was built in the north-west corner of the walled borough. When it was founded in 1058, the new church was built on a different site, having been removed from 'a rather more remote position nearer to the side of the town'. The abbey may have been moved yet again to a new site across the line of the old Roman defences when abbot Serlo began to build his new church in the reign of William the Conqueror. The greatest danger in speaking of the topography of pre-Conquest Gloucester is the danger of suggesting certain knowledge where firm information is difficult to obtain, and where we must have recourse to a good deal of conjecture.

As the 11th century advanced, the burgesses of Gloucester became richer as their trade increased, and they were certainly aware of their own community interest. Two things indicate the commercial prosperity of the borough. One was that there was a recognized standard of measures in use at Gloucester: goods would be weighed 'according to the standard of that same borough'.¹⁰ The other was the existence of a mint at Gloucester. Coins were being produced here in the last quarter of the 10th century, and the mint grew larger and more important as the 11th century progressed. Evidence of a corporate sense among burgesses before the Norman Conquest is never easy to find, but it existed at Gloucester. In 1022 a deed was attested by three communities, by 'the whole congregation of the old monastery', by 'all the brothers of the monastery of St Oswald's', and by the reeve and 'the whole city of Gloucester'. Elsewhere the burgesses could be described as 'the community of Gloucester'.¹¹

We have two surveys of the city surviving from the late 11th century. One is Domesday Book itself, which has something to say, though not in truth very much, about Gloucester as it was in 1086. The other is the Evesham survey, dating from 1097-1100. The Domesday account of Gloucester is limited. It tells us that in the time of king Edward the city paid each year £36, with further payments in kind which imply substantial trading and industrial activity. Twelve measures of honey were rendered annually to the king. Thirty-six measures of iron, and 100 rods of iron drawn out for nail-making, is an annual render which reflects the production of iron from the Forest of Dean and the activities of Gloucester's smiths in the 11th century. By 1086, this had been rationalized to a payment of £60, and the king had another £20 from the mint. In the time of king Edward, 'the whole of the king's demesne in the city was inhabited or cultivated', and 'when Earl William received it at farm, it was cultivated in the same way'. For the rest, apart from one or two details, the account consists of a list of more than twenty-four houses which had once paid royal customs in the time of king Edward, but which now paid nothing to the king or his agent. They had been removed altogether from the royal farm. A further sixteen houses had been destroyed for the site of the Norman castle, and there were fourteen houses derelict, or waste, within the walled borough. Only from references elsewhere in the survey can we confirm, what we might otherwise infer, that prominent landholders like St Peter's abbey had burgesses within the city and could

9. Lobel and Tann, *Historic Towns*, 1, 'Gloucester', 3.

10. D.B. 1, f. 162.

11. *Glouc. Cart.*, 1, 9; *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, ed. A. J. Robertson (Cambridge, 1939), 172. Both are cited, Lobel and Tann, 3.

claim customs and dues from them. One feature which emerges from the Domesday record for the shire is that there were many more manors, no fewer than eighty-one in all, which claimed as part of their assets a burgage in Gloucester itself.

The Evesham survey enables us to do what cannot be done from Domesday, that is to estimate the size of Gloucester's population at the end of the 11th century. It records a total of 611 burgesses, and if that figure is extended to take account of families, and of other types of households, it implies a total population of about 3,000. By 1100 there were ten parishes in Gloucester, and that would suggest rather a lower figure. If we think of a population of between 2,500 and 3,000 we shall probably be about right.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the Evesham survey is the indication which it gives of social change in Gloucester at the end of the 11th century. It tells us that in the Confessor's reign there were 300 royal burgesses, and it provides a breakdown of what has happened to these 300 tenements since king Edward died. Ninety-seven burgesses were still living on their family property; another ninety-seven had purchased their tenements from English freemen. Twenty-four burgesses lived within the precincts of the castle. Eighty-two tenements were waste. In addition there were 311 burgesses who acknowledged other lords. There was, clearly, a lively community at Gloucester, with a considerable element of social mobility reflected in the sale and transfer of burgage tenements. (If we went forward another hundred years or so to the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century, we should find the same to be true, but at that time there is a considerable amount of documentary evidence preserved in the borough records and in the archives of St Peter's, for the market in property in Gloucester.)¹²

The greatest and most obvious change which occurred as a result of the Norman Conquest was the building of the castle at Gloucester. The castle was symbolic of the new power which existed in England. It was built close to the Severn where it dominated and controlled the quay. It lay just outside the western corner of the Roman defences, but well within the area protected by the river. To make room for it the Normans destroyed sixteen houses; these, with the plot of land attached to each, would provide space for the simple motte and bailey castle. Before 1100 this had been extended into a larger structure, for another eight houses were destroyed to allow for this expansion. It had also become more imposing, and it was dominated by a great tower, mentioned in 1112. Thirty years later, during the troubled years of Stephen's reign, Gloucester was one of the main centres of the Angevin cause, and the castle was enlarged, with a new bailey, and a second line of defensive ditch.¹³

Castle defence and borough defence should go together. If we take Bristol in the 12th century, there is no question that the defences of borough and castle formed a unity.¹⁴ Or if we go forward two hundred years to the great building activities of Edward I, we can see how brilliantly he and his architects designed castles and boroughs as single defensive units, as they did, for example, at Conway or Caernarfon. There seems to be no record of the condition of the town defences of Gloucester during the Norman period. One fragment of information which has survived is that during Stephen's reign, when the city was put on a war-footing, the castellan of Gloucester demolished all the buildings next to the town wall so that any attacker penetrating the city's defences would have to fight on open ground inside the walls.¹⁵

12. For the deeds in the borough archives see *Calendar of the Records of the Corporation of Gloucester*, compiled by W. H. Stevenson (Gloucester, 1893). The deeds in the custody of the Dean and Chapter are stored in ten volumes of 'Deeds and Seals', and many texts are included in Gloucester Cathedral Registers A and B. See I. M. Kirby, *The Diocese of Gloucester*, vol. II, *A Catalogue of the Records of the Dean and Chapter including the former St Peter's Abbey, Gloucester* (Gloucester, 1967), pp. 1-22, and David Walker, 'Some Charters relating to St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester', *A Medieval Miscellany for Doris Mary Stenton*, Pipe Roll Society, New Series, XXXV, 247-68.

13. R. A. Brown, H. M. Colvin, and A. J. Taylor, *A History of the King's Works* (1963), I, 37; for the later history of the castle, II, 651.

14. *Ibid.*, II, 577; David Walker, *Bristol in the Early Middle Ages* (Bristol, 1971), 8-12.

15. David Walker, 'Charters of the Earldom of Hereford, 1095-1201', *Camden Miscellany*, Camden Fourth Series, I (1964), 3.

An important castle implies an important castellan. At Gloucester the sheriff was entrusted with custody of the principal stronghold in his shire, and here, these offices were held by one family as a hereditary possession. First of the line was Roger de Pîtres, who presumably built the castle. He was succeeded at some time before 1086 by his brother, Durand of Gloucester, sheriff at the time of the Domesday Survey, and then by his son, Walter of Gloucester, who survived well into the reign of Henry I. He, in turn, was succeeded by his son, Miles. Roger and Durand were comparatively minor figures, capable men with local responsibilities. Walter and Miles were loyal and devoted servants of Henry I, and they were given wider responsibilities. Miles, especially, was one of the administrators drawn from humble origins to serve Henry I, and reaping the benefits of the service which his dynasty had rendered to the crown, he became influential and wealthy. He and his eldest son married well, and they built up a formidable landed estate in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire and along the Welsh marches. This family was the most influential family in Gloucester between 1071 and 1155. Miles became earl of Hereford in 1141. His earldom was symbolic of the way in which this family developed from local administration to national responsibilities, and in three generations moved into the first rank of the English nobility.¹⁶

There was a link between this family, the castle, and the abbey of St Peter. Part of the land sequestered for the site of the new castle had been a garden belonging to the abbey, and the monks claimed parochial rights over the castle, its castellan, and its inhabitants.¹⁷ The right which the monks were most anxious to defend was the right of burial. With a powerful local family, such as that of the castellans of Gloucester, much might be at stake, especially in terms of prestige and of gifts of land. Roger of Pîtres and Durand were duly buried in the abbey cemetery, but Walter of Gloucester broke the habit and created a dangerous precedent. He became interested in the Augustinian canons established at that most beautiful of all Welsh monastic sites, Llanthony. There, he was received as a brother, and there he died and was buried. His son, Miles, continued this interest, and in 1136 he built the canons a new house, a second Lanthony, just outside Gloucester itself. He and his successors were generous patrons, and they gave gifts from their newly acquired riches to the canons of Lanthony. It must have been a bitter pill for the monks of St Peter's to swallow. In fact, when Miles died, he was buried at Lanthony, and the monks had the chance to assert their claims. Taking the matter to the bishop of Worcester, they secured a formal recognition that the right of burial of the castellans of Gloucester was theirs. By agreement, it was decided not to disturb the mortal remains of earl Miles, but the monks insisted that his successors must be buried in their abbey, and that none of them should be buried elsewhere without the monks' express approval. It was, alas, a paper victory. Earl Miles's eldest son and successor, it is true, became a monk at St Peter's, and was buried there, but he was the exception which proved the rule, for Lanthony remained the favourite monastery of the family.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Domesday Book records assets. It indicates present wealth, and it suggests potential. In that sense it is very much concerned with productivity. Manpower, livestock, and natural assets, these are the commonplace things of the Domesday Survey, for the commissioners were primarily interested in the yield, the profitability of an estate.¹⁸

Some features of the Gloucestershire landscape, all of which had an economic value, and were therefore noted in the survey, give no cause for surprise to the historian as he reads them today. Little is said about the Forest of Dean, which lay in the king's forest and was subject to special legal and economic restrictions. To preserve good hunting was more important there than to exploit the natural resources of the area to the full. There was little, if any, arable farming, and few recorded

16. See my papers, 'Miles of Gloucester, Earl of Hereford', *ante*, LXXVII, 66-84, and 'The "Honours" of the Earls of Hereford in the Twelfth Century', *ante*, LXXIX, pt ii, 174-211.

17. *Glouc. Cart.*, I, lxxvi.

18. Much of this section is based on Professor Darby's survey in H. C. Darby and I. B. Terrett, *The Domesday Geography of Midland England* (Cambridge, 1954), now available in a revised edition.

settlements. Elsewhere in Gloucestershire, woodland in the 11th century was markedly similar to the pattern we know today, though much more extensive. A clearly defined belt of wood ran along the Cotswold edge, from Winchcombe to Minchinhampton, and after a break, from Wotton-under-Edge to Chipping Sodbury. There were large pockets of wood in the Vale of Severn, notably near Tewkesbury, and Thornbury, and over to the west of Stroud. Meadow land was plentiful along the rivers and streams. The Cotswold rivers had a large tally of mills, many of them concentrated in a small area.

Other features were more unexpected. The shire had an unusually high proportion, 26 per cent—the highest in England—of servile population, serfs subject to the will of their master. There is surprisingly little waste land recorded, and here Gloucestershire stands in sharp contrast with the neighbouring areas of Herefordshire and Shropshire. It may have been omitted from the Domesday record, or it may be that there was comparatively little upheaval in the county, and manors were not laid waste here, as they were in so many parts of England. Another omission from the Gloucestershire survey is the absence, as a general rule, of any note of the ploughlands in individual manors. We know how many plough-teams were to be found on estates throughout the shire; we seldom hear whether the land was being used to the full, or whether it was understocked. So, exceptional entries assume a greater value: at Hambrook, we are told, there were four plough-teams, but there was land enough for five; at Alderton there were three teams and there could be three more; at Naunton there were four teams and there could be two more.¹⁹

We cannot explain easily another remarkable omission. The Gloucestershire Domesday does not, as a rule, note pasture land as one of the economic assets of a village, and this in a shire which throughout the middle ages was a centre of wool production and of the wool trade. Only four places in the Domesday shire were noted as having pasture (Tetbury, Shipton Moyne, Guiting, and Kempsford). Three more places, then lying outside the shire, can be added to the list (Long Newnton and Poole Keynes in Wiltshire, and part of Knowle in Somerset). For one other place, Cirencester, we are told that the queen had the wool of the sheep.²⁰ It is a curiously meagre record, and we do not know the explanation. Perhaps it is linked with the feature of the Domesday Survey which causes most surprise to the historian or the historical geographer today. On the face of it, we might expect to see a sharp difference between the economy of the Cotswolds and that of the Vale of Severn. But, in fact, this does not appear from the record. In intensity of settlement and of agriculture there is little to choose between these two major sections of the county.

There is one other, curious, and indeed exasperating, feature which we might notice. Markets are recorded for only four places, Berkeley, Cirencester, Tewkesbury, and Thornbury. In none of these cases is the market unexpected. The absence of any information about markets at the three main boroughs of Gloucester, Winchcombe, and Bristol, is, however, very odd.

Throughout Domesday Book economic assets are recorded in minute detail with what is a remarkable, and for this period, unique wealth of statistics. Behind these statistics there lie concealed human problems, created on a massive scale by the circumstances of the Norman Conquest.

In 1066 the old English aristocracy was overthrown, and a new Norman aristocracy was introduced into England. We can see something of the effects of this revolution in the pitiful list of estates held by the king's thegns in Gloucestershire in 1086. It comes right at the end of the county survey, almost as an after-thought.²¹ Once powerful men like Elsi of Farringdon, Ketel, and his son Eadric, or Oswald, now hold small estates. Figures from a vanished age, they can only manage to find a place as the least important landholders in the shire. The disaster which overtook these old English landholders is demonstrated on every folio of Domesday Book. Take one short entry: Osgod held Leckhampton; now William Leuric holds it. That entry could be multiplied to the point of monotony. Each individual case serves to drive home a basic fact of Domesday, that as it spells the triumph of a new landholding class it writes the obituary of the old aristocracy.

19. D.B., 1, ff. 165, 165b.

20. *Ibid.*, ff. 162b, 167b, 168, 169, 170; for the places outside Gloucestershire in 1086 see ff. 67, 69b, 98.

21. *Ibid.*, f. 170b.

From the Gloucestershire survey we can pick out the names of two men of great power in pre-Conquest times. There was Beorhtric, son of Aelfgar, who held Tewkesbury and its many dependencies, as well as Thornbury, Old Sodbury, Avening, Woolaston, and Fairford. We are told that, in the time of king Edward, Beorhtric held Tewkesbury 'and in his day he held the estates listed here of other thegns in his power'. There follows a long and impressive list of his clients, and at the end of the recital the Domesday scribe added by way of emphasis, 'Those who held these estates in the time of king Edward had submitted both themselves and their land to the power of Beorhtric.' Elsewhere, one of his men held Iron Acton, and three more held Wickwar. By any standard, Beorhtric was a man to be reckoned with.²²

Many of his estates passed to the Conqueror's queen, whose hand can be seen at work in them. She established a market at Tewkesbury, and she held Thornbury and Fairford. She gave estates, mainly to officials who served her, in Clifford Chambers, Wincot, Twynning, and Fairford. Ultimately, after her death, these rich possessions passed into the hands of Robert fitz Hamo to become the nucleus of the honour of Gloucester. In this case, a great Anglo-Saxon landholder passed from the scene, but the identity of his estates was preserved and maintained a continuous history after the Conquest.

The other great landholder was Harold, son of Godwine, earl of Wessex, and, for nine months, king of England. The Normans rarely gave him honourable recognition. Consistently, the Domesday clerks debased his status, and wrote him down simply as 'Harold'. Then, since confusion might arise, they added above his name the style of 'Earl'. His formal connection with Gloucestershire is not easy to determine. His brother, Sweyn, had authority in the shire which formed part of his own earldom, but he fell into disgrace on a number of occasions and was banished for the last time in 1049. Harold may not have become master of this part of the West Midlands until as late as 1057. But the extent of his interest in the shire by 1066 is made plain by Domesday Book. He had the third penny of Winchcombe; he held Alveston, Nass in Lydney, Chipping Campden, and Bromsberrow. After the death of Edward the Confessor he took possession of five manors, Haresfield, Down Hatherley, Sandhurst, Harescombe, and Brookthorpe. His thegns held estates in Ashton-under-Hill, Hempsted, and Weston-sub-Edge. Tovi, his housecarl, held land in Barrington. Others of his men held estates in Oldland, Tytherington, Stoke Giffard, Oxenhall, Brimpsfield, Didmarton, and Kempford. His sister, the Confessor's queen, held Marshfield. His mother held Woodchester. Many acres meant much power, and Harold was a powerful man in Gloucestershire even if he visited it only on occasions.

It is symbolic, and in a sense fitting, that in Gloucestershire where two great Anglo-Saxon magnates, Beorhtric and Harold, had passed from the scene, another great man should take their place. He was the Norman magnate, William fitz Osbern, earl of Hereford, one of the Conqueror's closest friends and advisers.²³ His career in England was as short as it was brilliant, for he was killed in a skirmish in Flanders in 1071. His son, a sullen untrustworthy man, jealous and resentful of the fact that the Conqueror did not give him the same confidence or authority which his father had enjoyed, rebelled in 1075, and was deprived of his honours and estates. His fall left a vacuum in the West Midlands which was not easily filled. The result was that the Domesday clerks could not write their account of Gloucestershire without coming back, again and again, to the names of William fitz Osbern and his son.

Earl William was commissioned to guard the southern border between England and Wales. He did much to shape the pattern of settlement and tenure in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, and the neighbouring shires; he began to probe the defences of the southern principality in Wales. Along the border he established castellaries, one of which, Striguil or Chepstow, is described in the

22. For a convenient summary of the history of Beorhtric's estates see *V.C.H. Gloucester*, vi, 185-7.

23. I have discussed his influence in the West Midlands and the Welsh borders in 'William fitz Osbern and the Norman Settlement in Herefordshire', *Trans. Woolhope Naturalists Field Club, Herefordshire*, xxxix, pt iii, 402-12; for his authority over Gloucestershire see W. E. Wightman, 'The Palatine Earldom of William fitz Osbern in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire (1066-1071)', *English Historical Review*, lxxvii, 6-17.

Gloucestershire Domesday. Before his death, he had set the pattern for the conquest of South Wales. On the English side of the border he was a powerful patron, and many of the prominent families of this area in the 12th century were indebted to him for the foundation of their territorial possessions. Roger de Pitres, sheriff of Gloucester, was one of the lesser figures in the earl's entourage who first rose to prominence in his service, and went on to find for himself and his successors a profitable career in the royal service. William fitz Osbern stands as an exceptionally powerful and successful example of the new aristocracy which was as dynamic as he was himself, and which reshaped the English kingdom after the Norman Conquest. They grasped the opportunities which duke William of Normandy offered them in his hazardous expedition to England. They seized and exploited the estates which were their reward. Exactly how they did that is writ large in Domesday Book.

THE ESTATES OF ST PETER'S ABBEY

To examine in detail how Domesday illustrates this exploitation, the estates of St Peter's abbey can be studied as a case-history. In 1086 St Peter's held estates in Abbot's Barton (and its members at Barnwood, Tuffley, and Morwent in Hartpurty), Frocester, Boxwell, Coln St Aldwyn, Aldsworth, Buckland, Hinton-on-the-Green, Highnam, Preston, Highleadon, Churcham and Morton, Ampney St. Peter, and Duntisbourne Abbots.²⁴ This group of estates reflects the changing fortunes of the monastery. A new chapter in its life opened in 1072 when William the Conqueror appointed abbot Serlo to take charge of what was then the decaying monastery at Gloucester. Serlo revived the spiritual life of the monastery, earning the approval of archbishop Lanfranc, himself a zealot for the religious life. He also restored the material fortunes of his monastery.

By 1066 the ancient endowments of St Peter's had been sadly depleted, for the first half of the 11th century was a period of decline for the abbey. Two manors, Badgeworth and Hatherley, had been sold by abbot Eadric in 1022. Aldred, bishop of Worcester, and later archbishop of York obtained possession of a number of St Peter's manors, Oddington, Eastleach, Standish, and Abbot's Barton. Smaller losses also occurred. Part of the Herefordshire manor of Hope Mansel was said to have been held by St Peter's in the time of king Edward, but it had passed into other hands before 1086.²⁵

In later centuries the monks of St Peter's believed abbot Serlo to have been responsible for the major task of restoring their fortunes. They also gave credit to Odo, their first cellarer, who was professed by abbot Serlo in 1077, and 'by whose labour and industry the church of Gloucester was enriched with many estates and possessions'.²⁶ It was abbot Serlo who used his connection with the first two Norman kings to force Thomas of Bayeux, archbishop of York, to restore the manors taken by his predecessor, Aldred. He also secured the restoration of Frocester and Coln St Aldwyn. (We learn this from the records of the monastery; the Domesday entries for these two manors give no hint that restoration was necessary.) More impressive still is the list of places in which, as the Gloucester cartulary bears witness, lands, churches, tithes, and rights were given to St Peter's while Serlo was abbot. The full list runs to about fifty entries, and it would be burdensome both to read and to hear. But to pick examples, there were acquisitions in Ashperton and Much Cowarne in Herefordshire, and in Selden and Plymtree in Devon. In Gloucestershire the abbey was enriched with possessions in the Ampneys, Brookthorpe, Coln Rogers, Chesterton, Clinger, Duntisbourne Abbots, the Leadons, Maisemore, Painswick, Quenington, Rodley, Sandhurst, and Tuffley; and this does not, by any means, exhaust the list. Such gains are a powerful illustration of the way in which Serlo attracted the attention and interest of the new Norman magnates and of the knights who settled on their estates in this and other shires.

24. D.B., I, f. 165b. A number of these manors have been examined in volumes of the *V.C.H. Gloucester*, e.g. Hinton-on-the-Green (VIII, 262), Churcham, Frocester, Highnam (X, 11, 18, 170).

25. *Glouc. Cart.*, I, 8-9; D.B., I, f. 185b.

26. *Glouc. Cart.*, I, 11. Serlo's activities are reflected especially in the 'list of donations' which the monks compiled as a comprehensive index of the abbey's estates (*ibid.*, I, 58-122).

In 1086 this process was still incomplete, but Domesday Book can show us something of its progress. Already, Walter de Lacy had given the monks an estate in Leadon (in Bishop's Frome, Herefordshire). By 1086 he was dead, and his widow had given the monks an estate in Duntisbourne which was worth £4.²⁷ The 1090s seem to have been a period during which many acquisitions were made, and by the end of the 11th century the abbey was well endowed.

It is also clear from Domesday Book that the abbey's estates were being exploited to good advantage. Abbot's Barton, with its dependencies, provided work for no fewer than fifty-four plough teams. In king Edward's day it had been worth £8; by 1086 it was worth £24. The majority of the abbey's manors were producing much more each year than they had done before the Conquest. Frocester had increased in value from £3 to £8; Buckland from £3 to £9; Hinton-on-the-Green from £3 to £10. Only at Highleadon and Ampney St Peter was some kind of progress not maintained. All told, the estates listed in the Domesday account of the abbey's lands show a total increase in annual value from £38 19s. 5d. to £91. For two estates, valued at £5 10s., in 1086 there is no figure for the pre-conquest value. It was the exception rather than the rule to show so marked an increase. There are no complete and absolute figures for Gloucestershire, but we can establish a standard by which to judge Serlo's success. Domesday Book frequently gives us two statements of value, one in the time of king Edward, and the other for 1086, and we have these two figures for rather more than 300 of the 363 estates described in Gloucestershire. We find that in 35 per cent of these estates there was no change in value between 1066 and 1086. In 44 per cent there was a drop in value, often of substantial proportions. Only in 20 per cent was there an increase in value. The other great landholder whose states showed a consistent increase in value was the abbey of Winchcombe.

The men responsible for this highly efficient estate-management at Gloucester are not known, though presumably Odo the cellarer played a leading part. We cannot say what consequences it might have had for the dependent peasantry of the abbey's manors. But there can be no doubt that it reflects the activities of a well-informed and zealous abbot. Domesday Book tells the same story as the records of St Peter's abbey itself: abbot Serlo transformed the abbey and its possessions. Where he found decay and apathy, he left zeal and order, and from an unpromising start he built up a sound and flourishing economy.

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27. D.B., 1, ff. 165b, 184b.