Introduction

The scope of this study

This is a study of institutions and the economy in one southern English county during the early and central Middle Ages. All its themes have long attracted historians, and all have seen much research in the last twenty years: the manorial structure, agrarian growth, field-systems, parish churches and the parochial system. But the more they are examined, the more hidden problems emerge and the less adequate the old generalisations seem. Only very detailed local studies will tell us what was really happening: such, inescapably, is the nature of the evidence. Unfortunately it is easy to become restricted thematically as well as geographically, and to view an institution not merely within a small region, but also without reference to other forces which moulded its development and the lives of those on whom it impinged. The present work tries to avoid this second weakness: its central aim is to show how systems of lordship, tenure, agriculture, ecclesiastical jurisdiction and pastoral care changed together and affected each other.

Historians used to favour a view of the manor which makes it secondary and incidental to the village, its late Anglo-Saxon lord 'gradually gaining the mastery over a rural community of ancient and independent growth'.[1] From its beginnings English rural society was based on townships, each with its nucleated settlement and common fields. The growth of the manor, which interposed private lordship between the king and these communities, failed to destroy them or obscure their organic nature. A dissenting note was sounded in 1958 by T H Aston, who argued that Anglo-Saxon settlement was always organised along seigneurial lines, and claimed of the peasantry that 'their tenements and tenure, their customs and even their status, have evolved from the beginning to meet the complex needs, private and public, of great lords from the king downwards'.[2] Yet a current textbook still unquestioningly assumes the antecedence of the village: 'the manorial framework was a landowning and land-management grid superimposed on the settlement pattern of villages and hamlets'.[3] This assumption is made more dubious than ever by recent work which sees medieval lordship influencing the formation and structure of the very institutions which have seemed to be immemorially stable. To re-interpret the origins of nucleated settlements, subdivided holdings and common agriculture has drastic implications indeed, for in the minds of earlier writers these were the very essence of the village community.

No view of social organisation can ignore the development of population and economy. A neat model of continuous growth, of a steady progress from the centre to the margins, will no longer do. It now seems likely that the population of Britain in the 4th century was as high as on the eve of the Black Death,[4] and the trend between these dates is a matter for debate. It is also becoming clear that the human geography of early medieval England was much more a matter of flux, of settlements moving, splitting and combining rather than simply growing. Sharply aware that the sources are selective and leave much unsaid, some historians now argue for high economic development in the mid-Saxon period, moving backwards the main 'age of expansion' by some centuries. It has become necessary to ask whether the evidence for changes in land exploitation and the pattern of lordship does, in fact, support this drastic shift of emphasis away from the late Anglo-Saxon and Norman centuries.

To think of the parish system as an institution which developed independently of its secular context is natural but anachronistic. The early minster parishes were based directly on the pattern of royal administration, and the great mass of rural churches were above all else a product of developing local lordship. It is the contention here that the real functions of churches can only

be grasped by considering the landscapes which they served, while at the same time their creation is one of the most tangible signs of economic change.

To elucidate these problems further demands an intensive, integrated approach within confined areas. Anyone who attempts such work should know his region at first-hand: hence, in this case, the choice of Surrey. A poor and rather nondescript county, surrounded by areas with strongly-marked characteristics but with none of its own, it is scarcely appealing on other grounds. Yet in some ways this very character as a border zone makes it a good subject for local work directed towards general conclusions. The manorial structure and field-systems of medieval Surrey have tended to elude categorization. Most of their attributes can be matched in either Kent, Sussex, East Anglia or the Midlands, yet as a whole they will not square neatly with any of the familiar models. The more distinctive and self-consistent a region's customs are, the more it will seem peculiar to itself. But Surrey serves as a mirror, reflecting back the characteristics of better-known counties and highlighting common elements in institutions which have seemed only to contrast with each other.

No apology should now be needed for giving a due emphasis to topography; yet it must be admitted that local topographical data are hard to present clearly and simply. Sometimes points of substance cannot be made without detailed discussion of boundaries, settlement sites and field monuments, and these digressions into detail may be tiresome to a reader unfamiliar with the region. Constant reference should be made to the index maps of parishes and hundreds (figs 1 & 2) and the map of geographical zones (fig 3B), which will help to locate the main places and areas mentioned in the text.

The county of Surrey

Surrey, in P Brandon's words, 'recalls to mind not one landscape but a mosaic of four – the still densely wooded Weald; the wild, rough sweeps of heathland around Hindhead and Leith Hill; the Chalk upland of the North Downs; and the quiet, reposeful vales which interweave the other landscapes together'.[5] Though a small county, it has always been characterised by contrasting regions, based on geological strata which run in narrow bands from east to west (figs 3A and B). The North Downs, high and broad in the east and tapering westwards into a straight, narrow ridge called the Hog's Back, form the backbone of the county. On both sides the chalk dips below large overlying expanses of clay: northwards in the London Basin, continuing along the dip-slope of the Downs as a broad clay vale, and southwards in the Weald, extending across Sussex to the South Downs. Along the dip-slope, a narrow but fertile strip of Reading and Thanet Beds divides the chalk from the heavy London Clay. The scarp-slope, too, is separated from the Weald Clay by a broader band of lighter soil, the Lower Greensand Belt, which extends westwards from Kent through the Vale of Holmesdale and widens out to include most of south-western Surrey. This linear pattern is only broken in the north-west of the county, which lies on the barren, sandy soils of the Bagshot Series.

Surrey contains little good agricultural land. Both the Weald Clay and the London Clay are heavy to work, boggy and liable in their natural state to acquire a heavy oak cover. The broom-grown heaths of the Bagshot area are among the worst land in southern Britain, and even 18th- and 19th-century improvers tended to dismiss them as hopeless.[6] The chalk and Greensand are lighter, but relatively poor in their yield. The best soils lie in narrow ribbons along the dip-slope and the scarp-slope of the Downs: by the central Middle Ages the villages and field-systems strung out along these lines formed a strongly marked pattern. Geology has always dictated that the agrarian landscape of Surrey should be varied: a balance of different resources
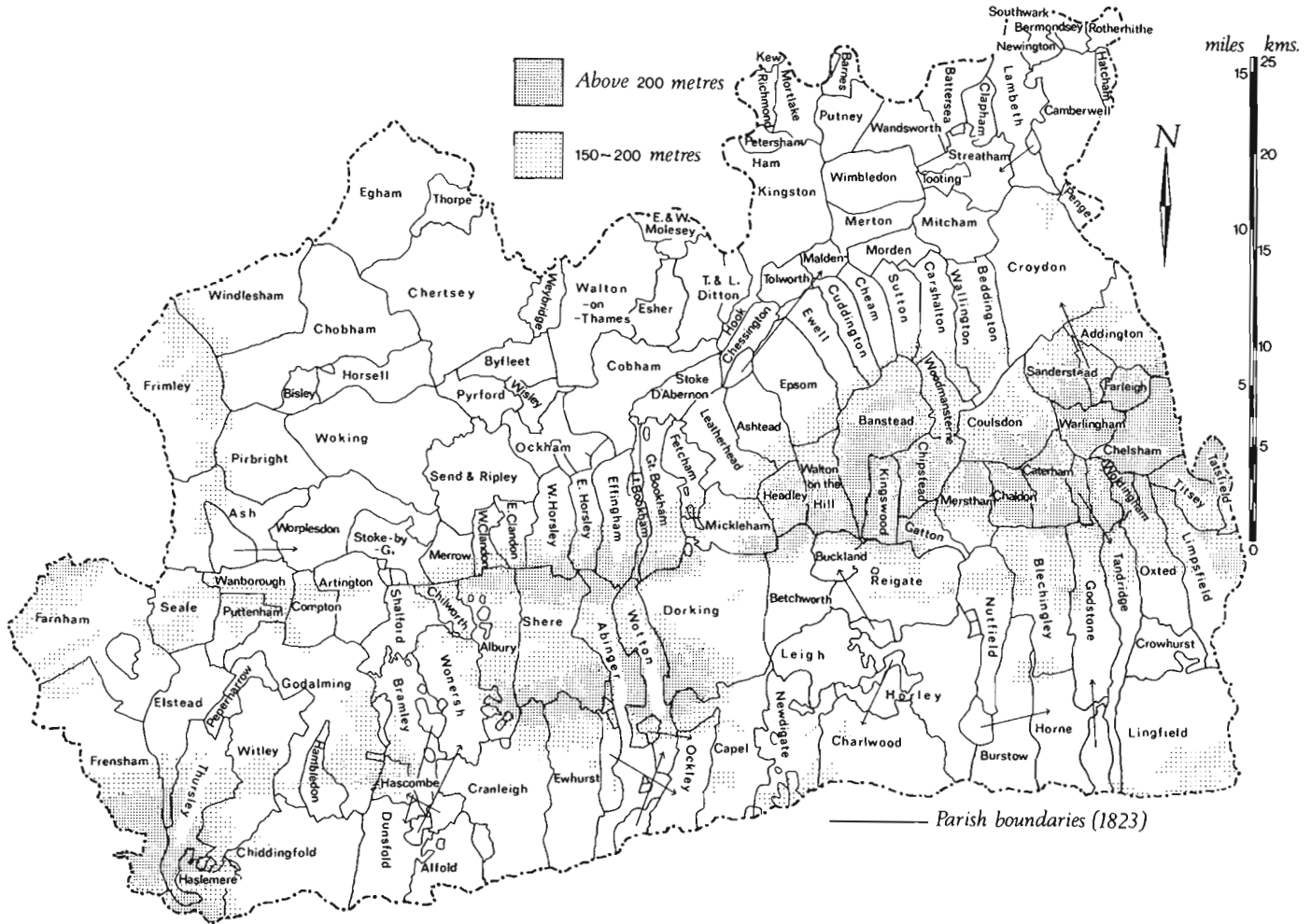
Fig 1   Index map of parishes

Above 200 metres

150~200 metres

Brixton

Kingston

Godley

Elmbridge

Wallington

Woking

Copthorne

Effingham

Tandridge

Reigate

Farnham

Godalming

Blackheath

Wotton
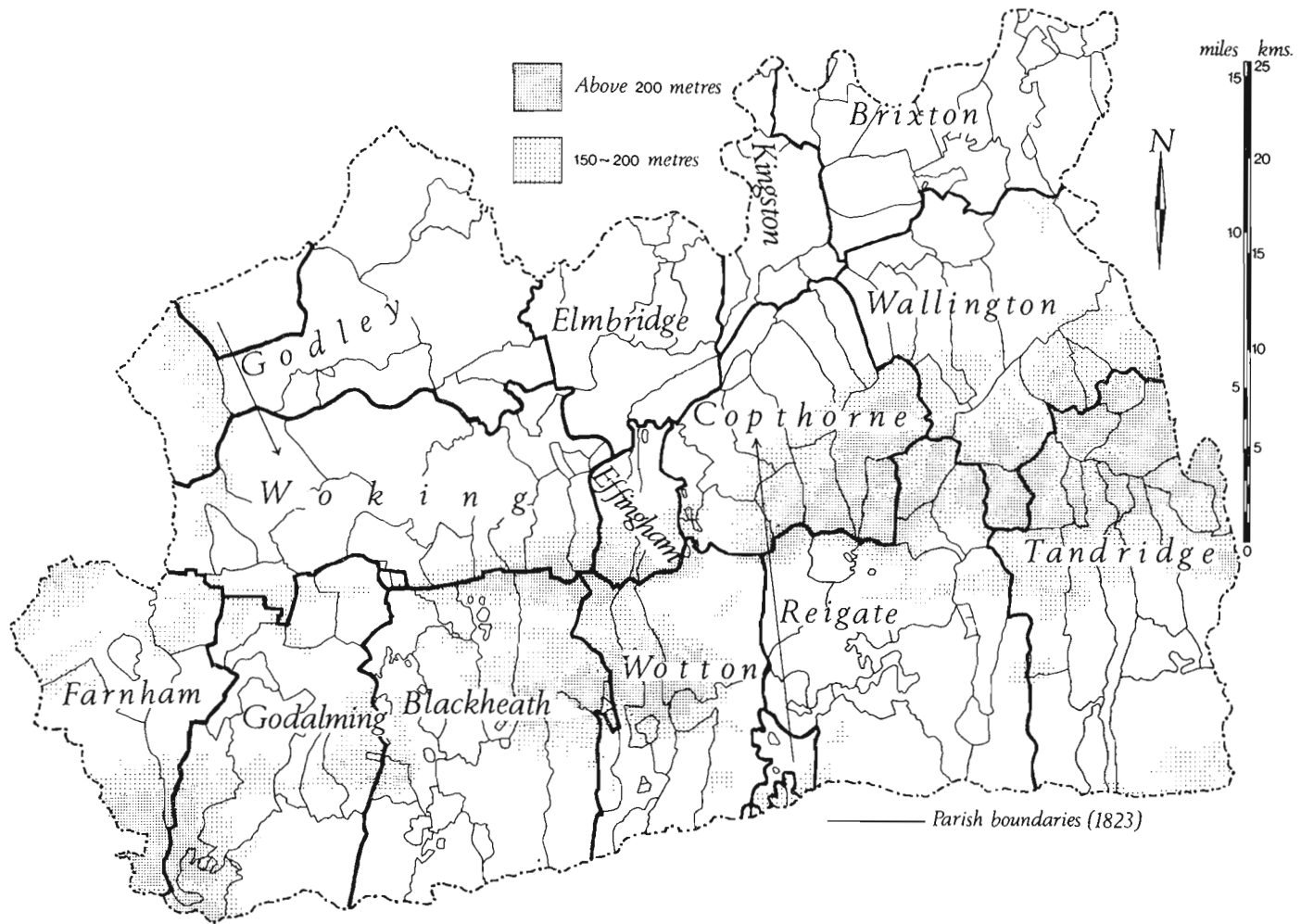
————— Parish boundaries (1823)

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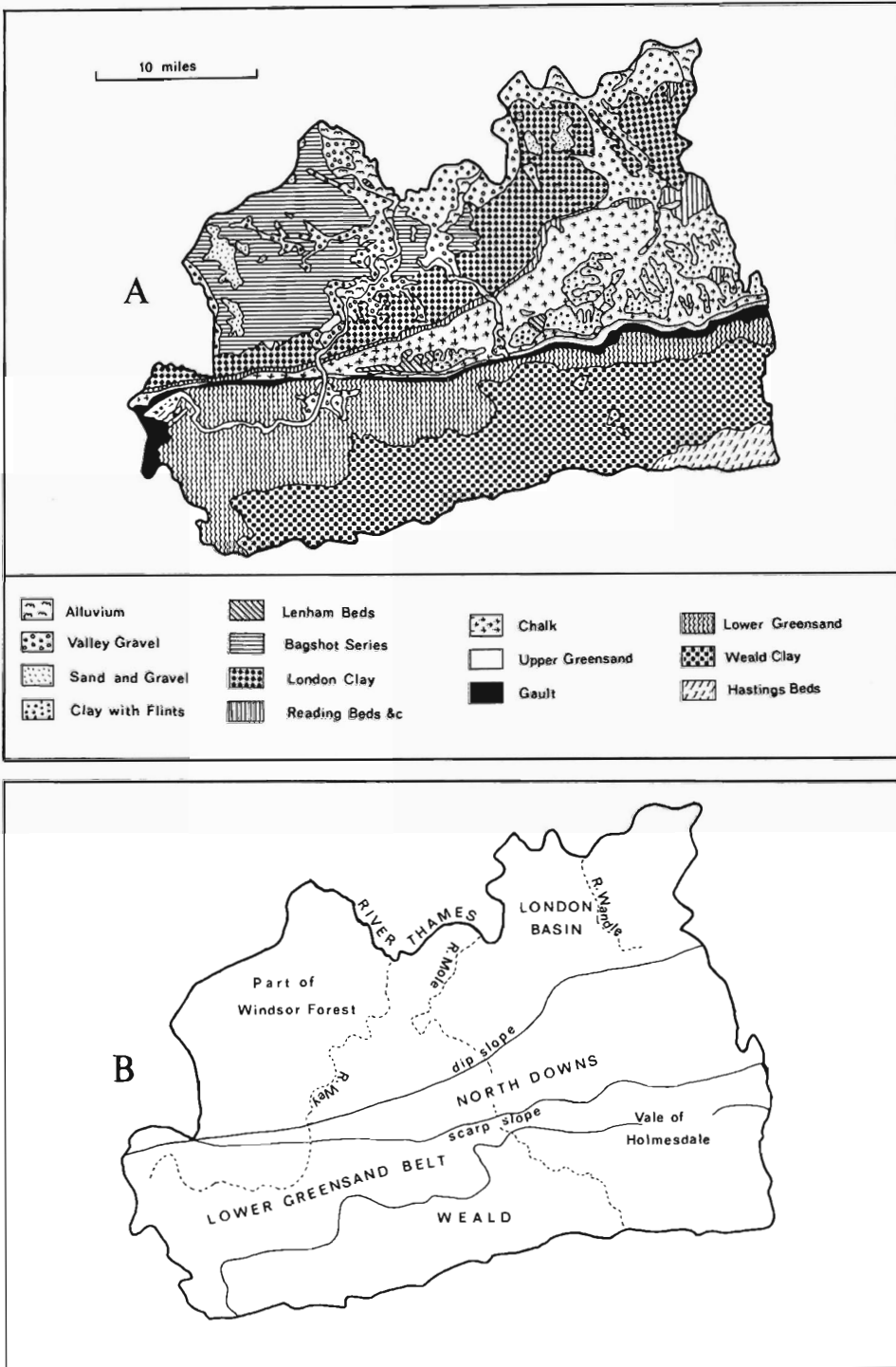
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Fig 2   Index map of hundreds

Fig 3 A Geology B Geographical regions. (Based on Darby & Campbell, *Domesday geography of south-east England*, figs 106 and 118)

within short range of each other, rather than the great expanses of open field which characterised 'champion' England.

Naturally enough, the main lines of west-east communication have always been along the Thames and the chalk slopes. The existence of continuous North Downs trackways now seems dubious,[7] but both the main ridgeway and the line along the scarp-slope terrace may well approximate to ancient routes. Further north, an early trackway connected the villages dotted along the dip-slope (fig 15). The main arteries southwards from the Thames were the rivers Wey, Mole and Wandle, though all were too small to be of much use for large-scale navigation. Stane Street, the Roman road from Chichester to London, traversed the Wealden forest and linked the more settled areas of Sussex and Surrey. The whole of the Surrey Weald is broken up by long tracks running from north to south; some may be Roman trackways, but most are drove-roads produced by the complex transhumance grazing systems of the earlier Middle Ages.[8] They help to explain the persistent north-south linearity of boundaries which is so noticeable in the southern part of the county.

In the Roman period a crucial event for future Surrey was the foundation of London, towards which the road-pattern converged, and of a bridgehead settlement on the site of Southwark. The region contained several villas, presumably the centres of grain-producing estates; other significant products were pottery, tiles (notably from the Ashtead villa) and Wealden iron. London is the obvious destination for food-surpluses from the region. The absence of any significant town, combined with the concentration of sites along Stane Street and the road from Lewes, makes it hard not to suspect that Surrey was already what it was to be centuries later: a hinterland dominated by London.[9]

From the beginnings of written history, Surrey was neither a separate kingdom nor a stable element within a kingdom. Already in the annal ascribed to 568, when Ceawlin of Wessex 'fought against Æthelberht and drove him into Kent',[10] it appears as frontier territory buffeted between the southern English rulers, and this was to be its fate for nearly three centuries. Attempts to reconstruct political boundaries before the late 7th century have long taken account of the bewildering, sometimes contradictory evidence for cultural links derived from excavated grave-goods. But recent work has begun to disclose a new and crucial factor: the existence from a very early date of an orderly system of administrative districts and boundaries. To claim – as it no longer seems fantastic to claim – that the local government of early England was more organised and stable than the broad political structure, is to place the formation of the early kingdoms in a very different light.

It is widely accepted that there is a valid distinction between the 'Saxon' occupation of Wessex, Sussex and Surrey and the 'Jutish' occupation of Kent, the boundary between the cultures of Kent on the one hand, and of Surrey and Sussex on the other, lying roughly on the line of the river Medway.[11] But how did colonisation proceed? Did the first settlers of Surrey move northwards from Sussex as well as southwards from the Thames? Was Berkshire colonised from lands to the south, by penetration up the Thames Valley, or from some different direction?

Cemetery and place-name links between Sussex and Surrey are strong enough to imply at least a significant degree of early trans-Weald contact, presumably along Stane Street and the Roman trackways.[12] It has been argued that the *Paling-* names scattered along the line of Stane Street from Poling in Sussex to Pallinghurst and Pollingfold in Surrey 'strongly suggest that the coastal villages of Felpham and Poling had a group of dependent hamlets stretching right across the Weald beyond the borders of the South Saxon kingdom'.[13]

The evidence of early provincial boundaries, discussed below in ch 1, heightens the impression that Surrey had close links with Sussex and indeed with Kent: the whole area, with the notable exception of the westernmost third of Surrey, seems to resolve itself into one symmetrical series

of territorial divisions radiating into the Weald (below, p22 and fig 8). Economically and topographically, the three south-eastern counties seem much of a piece.

Beside this must be set the obvious fact that a major line of Saxon advance was along the Thames. The earliest colonisation of northern Surrey seems to have followed the Wey, Mole and Wandle valleys, especially the Wandle with its group of large cemeteries in the Croydon/Mitcham area.[14] This is not, of course, incompatible with advance from the south, but it suggests a pattern in which the Thames acted less as a barrier between ethnic groups than as an artery from which one folk could infiltrate the land on either side. The name Surrey – suðre ge, 'the southern province' – has long drawn historians to a view summed up by Gover, Mawer & Stenton in 1934:[15]

> If the name Surrey is parallel to the names Suffolk and Eastry, it can hardly have meant anything else than the southern province of the original Middle Saxons. The early history of this people is extremely obscure. London and presumably the whole of Middlesex had come to form part of the East Saxon kingdom before the end of the sixth century, and there is no record of any Middle Saxon dynasty. On the other hand, it is hard to believe that a people bearing such a name as *Middel Seaxe*, strictly analogous in form to *Suth Seaxe* or *Middel Engle*, were originally confined within the narrow limits of the modern Middlesex . . . A territory comprising both Middlesex and Surrey would be large enough to support one of the smaller peoples of the sixth century, and its division into two parts by the Thames would be exactly parallel to the recorded division of the early Mercians into two provinces separated by the Trent.

M Gelling's survey of Berkshire has added another dimension to this hypothesis.[16] In her view the eastern arm of the county, separated from the rest by an under-developed tract rich in – *feld* names, has strong place-name links with Surrey.[17] She suggests that the Mid Saxon kingdom may also have included this part of Berkshire and the area of Buckinghamshire between the Thames and the Chilterns. In the lower Thames Valley she identifies a series of early territorial units, extending a pattern which used to be thought peculiar to Kent and Sussex (cf below, pp22–3). Hence boundary changes may not have been arbitrary fluctuations but the transference of coherent districts: this part of future Berkshire comprised one territory associated with the *Sunningas* and perhaps another associated with the *Rēadingas*, their names preserved today in those of Sonning and Reading.[18] Such provincial units, whether with or without tribal connotations, begin to seem more concrete entities than counties or even kingdoms.

Before pursuing this problem further, we may consider the one piece of solid evidence for the political origins of Surrey: the charter of 672 × 4 by which 'Frithuwold of the province of the men of Surrey, sub-king of Wulfhere king of Mercia', grants land by the Thames to Chertsey minster.[19] The north-west boundary of this estate was 'the next province which is called Sonning'; the east boundary was 'the ancient ditch, that is *Fullingadic*', identified here (below, p14) as an earthwork running southwards from the Thames at Weybridge. It appears that Frithuwold was not a native king of Surrey,[20] but a member of a great Mercian dynasty which also included Frithuric, founder of the Leicestershire minster of Breedon-on-the-Hill and first witness to the Chertsey charter.[21] An admittedly late and unreliable source, the Life of St Osyth of Aylesbury, makes Frithuwold a brother-in-law of King Wulfhere and mentions his palace at Quarrendon (Buckinghamshire);[22] it is arguable that he ruled a large sub-kingdom on the south-east fringes of Mercia, which extended down the Thames Valley between Mercia proper and the Middle Saxons and which thus included the Reading and Sonning *regiones*.[23] This hypothesis introduces another political entity of which Surrey could have been the *suðre ge*.

The difficulty of interpreting the name by reference either to the Middle Saxons or to Frithuwold's realm is that both seem to have been somewhat late and artificial creations: like the Middle Angles, they were amalgams of tribal territories only welded together under 7th-century

Mercian overlordship.[24] The Kentish -*ge* names, Eastry, Lyminge and Sturry, were all of earlier formation and all denote areas much smaller than Surrey; it is worth asking whether the original Surrey may have been equally small. For Bede it was not a 'provincia' but merely a 'regio';[25] the Chertsey charter, in a terminology different from Bede's, calls Frithuwold 'provinciae Surrianorum' and refers to the 'terminus alterius provinciae quae appellatur Sunninges' as though Surrey and the Sonning territory were of like kind. A neat solution to Surrey's conflicting affinities with the Weald and with the Thames Valley would be to suggest that *suðre ge* originally denoted merely that third of the later county which lies west of the *Fullingadic* line: in other words, which is economically and territorially of a piece with the Reading and Sonning units rather than with Kent and Sussex (below, p14). This could then be seen as the southern half of a lost 6th-century chiefdom, of which the remainder would be the Staines *regio* north of the Thames.[26]

Thus medieval Surrey was formed in a context of overlordship which was itself transient but which was based on much more stable entities, the organic tribal *regiones*. Orderly territorial division, perhaps older than the Anglo-Saxons themselves, was certainly older than the organised Anglo-Saxon states. Seventh-century kingdoms grew and shrank from one year to the next; it is hardly likely that they were more stable in the 6th. The political context in which land between Sussex and the Thames was appropriately called 'the southern province' probably lies in the lost years before the era of Mercian sub-kingdoms.

The eastwards enlargement of Surrey at the expense of Kent can apparently be dated closely. Chertsey minster had been founded *c*666 under King Egbert of Kent, as is explicitly stated in Frithuwold's charter of 672 × 4. By then the whole of later Surrey (or at any rate its boundary along the Thames) seems to have been in Frithuwold's hands, for the charter also mentions land opposite the port of London; Bermondsey minster was founded a few years later, evidently in the context of patronage by Frithuwold's family (below, pp103–4). Thus it seems not unlikely that Frithuwold had himself played a major part in the Mercian advance south of the Thames, and had been rewarded in kind. Possibly the events of this period explain the presence near the Surrey–Kent border of linear earthworks, facing Surrey as a defence against armies coming from the west.[27]

Surrey is not identifiable in the late 7th-century Tribal Hidage, unless we locate there the unintelligible 'Noxgaga' and 'Ohtgaga', or follow J C Russell's conjecture that 'Hendrica' and 'Unecungga' are scribal perversions of 'Sudrica' and 'Suningga'.[28] The latter suggestion, if correct, would give Surrey 3,500 hides, which may be compared with the 3,400 hides assessed to Eashing and Southwark in the Burghal Hidage, and with the 2,000 hides for which the county was assessed in 1086.[29]

By the late 680s Cædwalla had decisively turned the power-balance south of the Thames in favour of Wessex, and his Farnham charter of 685 × 8 shows him master of south-western Surrey.[30] It is certain that both Cædwalla and Ine after him exercised authority in Surrey, if perhaps uneasily and intermittently,[31] and a papal privilege of 708 × 15 locates the Surrey minsters of Bermondsey and Woking 'in provincia West Saxonum'.[32] We next hear of Surrey under the Mercian overlordship of Offa, whose confirmation of a grant to Woking church was issued from a royal vill 'in regione Suthregeona' (below, pp20, 95). From the victory of Ecgbert of Wessex in 825, when the men of Surrey, Kent, Sussex and Essex submitted to him 'because formerly they had been wrongly forced away from [allegiance to] his kinsmen',[33] Surrey was decisively part of Wessex. It was probably during the next few decades that it finally gained coherence as a West Saxon shire, with boundaries much as they remained until modern times.[34]

Yet Surrey was still something of a backwater. In the 10th century, indeed, it contained one place of ceremonial importance, for kings of the house of Wessex chose to be crowned at their vill of Kingston (below, p99). But Kingston, and still more the *burh* of Southwark, were on the

Thames and must have looked more towards London than towards Surrey. None of the other *villae regiae* were of much account in national events. Chertsey minster remained the only religious establishment of note; when Edward the Elder reorganised the West Saxon sees in 909 he left Surrey in Winchester diocese, of which it was the remoter archdeaconry until the present century.[35] Nor do the TRE data in Domesday Book reveal any great noble whose main power-base was in Surrey: the main lay landowners were Godwine and his sons, and the Kentish thegns Æthelnoth and Beorhtsige (below, pp115–19). In the 10th and 11th centuries as later, Surrey was not the focus of anything very important; the main influences to which it was subject came from London and Winchester.

The effects of the Conquest on the economy and society of Surrey were not notable. The trail of depreciated manors which some have ascribed to William's journey to London extends into north-east Surrey,[36] but there was no devastation on a scale to affect the basic pattern of rural life. Two important tenurial changes over the next three decades were the successive creation of the Clare and Warenne baronies. Richard fitz Gilbert was the biggest Surrey tenant in 1086, though even this estate was merely one element in a barony whose *caput* was in Suffolk.[37] In 1088 William de Warenne was created Earl of Surrey and endowed with extensive lands.[38] Despite his title the *caput* was again outside the county, at Lewes, but much of south-eastern Surrey passed into Warenne hands. Both baronies were strongly influenced by the pre-Conquest pattern: Richard fitz Gilbert inherited three substantial TRE estates *en bloc*,[39] while the Warenne manors were mainly those which had been Queen Edith's demesne.[40] Both lords, however, consolidated blocks of land around their respective local *capita*, which were in the south-east of the county. Richard fitz Gilbert united Blechingley and Chivington into one manor centred on Blechingley castle,[41] while Warenne added Betchworth with its outliers in Leigh, Newdigate and Horley to Queen Edith's great manors of Reigate and Dorking.[42] This regrouping, reminiscent of the far greater post-Conquest reorganisation of Sussex,[43] overlay and obscured the ancient linear pattern of boundaries (cf below, p17, and fig 11G).

With the royal castle at Guildford and Henry of Blois's episcopal palace at Farnham, Reigate and Blechingley castles were the main feudal and military centres of 12th-century Surrey.[44] On a humbler level are the simple mottes at Walton-on-the-Hill and Abinger (figs 41 & 40), the latter the *caput* of a small Surrey estate held under William fitz Ansculf.[45] By the 12th century the centre of county jurisdiction, which may once have been Leatherhead (below, p20), had settled in the late Saxon *burh* of Guildford. Several small market towns emerge into recorded history during the 12th and 13th centuries (below, pp56–8), but there was still nowhere of any real size: apart from Guildford and Southwark only Reigate and Blechingley were represented in Edward I's parliaments, and this because of their baronial rather than their urban importance.[46] Anglo-Norman monastic foundations – the Cluniac abbey of Bermondsey, the Cistercian abbey of Waverley and the Augustinian priories of Merton and Southwark – were important houses but scarcely among the greatest.[47]

Something which did significantly affect the economy of Surrey was the creation of Windsor Forest.[48] The only Domesday reference is in the Pyrford entry, which states that 'de hac terra habet rex 3 hidas in foresta sua'. Stoke-by-Guildford is said to be 'in parco regis', presumably Guildford Park which later appears as one of the walks within the forest.[49] Henry II afforested his manors of Woking, Brookwood and Stoke-by-Guildford,[50] and subsequently declared the whole county, or at least the royal demesne within it, to be forest. In 1191 Richard I disafforested everything except the north-west quarter of the county, the boundaries being fixed as the Wey eastwards, Guildford Downs southwards and the Berkshire border north-eastwards. These boundaries were reaffirmed in 1225, and (despite Henry III's wholesale disafforestation of 1226) again in 1280.[51] In fact it is clear from the Forest eyre rolls (below, pp40–3) that most of north-western Surrey was under the regarders' jurisdiction throughout Henry III's reign, and

with Guildford Park the whole area appears on Norden's map of Windsor Forest surveyed in 1607.[52] It is highly likely that the Hog's Back and the Wey were for all practical purposes the boundaries from the Norman period onwards: the woods and sandy, gorse-grown heaths of Godley hundred and part of Woking hundred have a natural geographical affinity with the Berkshire and Hampshire parts of the Forest. Here the restrictions of forest law combined with the natural barrenness of the soil to make north-west Surrey a retarded area throughout the Middle Ages.

Sources from Domesday Book onwards give a rough measure of relative economic development. In 1086 Surrey was one of the more lightly settled parts of lowland England (cf fig 14). Only the manors in the immediate periphery of London were relatively well-populated, while the Windsor Forest area was among the few zones of conspicuously low density south of the Humber.[53] By 1334, when the Lay Subsidy returns indicate the relative distribution of moveable lay wealth, Surrey seems to have caught up a little with surrounding regions. The whole county except the Wealden hundreds and the Forest area has £10 to £19 assessed wealth per square mile, in common with about 60% of the lowland zone. Once again, it is the sandy area in the north-west which stands out as under-developed, with a lower incidence of wealth than virtually any other part of southern England.[54] Both in 1086 and 1334, pockets of very heavy settlement and exploitation such as existed in south Sussex and south-east Kent are conspicuous by their absence.

Medieval Surrey had the mixed economy appropriate to its varied soils. A major activity in the earlier Middle Ages was the seasonal droving of swine and cattle to summer pastures in the Weald; more localised grazing links also crossed the geological strata from one soil-type to another. Evidence from 13th- and 14th-century demesnes suggests 'a good mixed economy in Middlesex and Surrey, with plenty of emphasis upon wheat, barley and oats, many sheep, and a fair number of swine'.[55] But it was only for more specialised products that Surrey was at all notable. Fruit-growing flourished in a county which was to become famous for its market-gardens, and in the 14th century all the Merton College manors in Surrey had cider-presses.[56] Wealden timber went far afield; there is also evidence for medieval coppicing on the small Downland manor of Farleigh,[57] and in 1288/9 the monks of Westminster took building-timber from a demesne wood in Pyrford (below, p42). The Weald, of course, was a cradle for industries needing fuel: iron-working in Roman and medieval times, and glass-making in the Chiddingfold area from the 13th century.[58] A fulling-mill existed at Abinger by c1250, and in the later Middle Ages cloth-making flourished around Guildford.[59] These varied products were the more important in a county which lacked the natural resources to become a major grain-producer.

The two aspects of Surrey which most need emphasis here are its closeness to London and its abundance of woods and wastes. Fruit, iron, glass and cloth – not to mention grain and timber – were all products suitable for an urban market. Apart from Southwark, which to all intents and purposes was part of London, Surrey was essentially rural. Overwhelmingly, the commercial focus was London, and the stimulus which it gave to its hinterland is apparent even as early as Domesday Book (below, pp39–40). By the same token, citizens of London formed Surrey contacts and invested in Surrey land. The 12th century gives a few examples, such as the de Cornhills at Addington and Ralph the Vintner at Banstead,[60] while late 13th- and 14th-century deeds show Londoners taking an active part in the Surrey land-market (below, pp81–2). This factor should not be over-stressed, but in the absence of strong economic interests within the county it must have contributed to the general fluidity of land-tenure and society.

More fundamental here, though, is the fact that the population of post-Roman Surrey never rose to a level which drove the plough to the margins: it always remained, at least by Midland standards, a well-wooded county. The three Wealden counties share many agrarian peculiarities, and (though Surrey was always the poorest) all three supported the same kind of relatively free and prosperous peasantry. Even outside the Weald, the wastes and commons of Surrey never

shrank to the point at which they became in really short supply. Surrey belonged to the 'wood-pasture' rather than the 'champion' zone of England: this fact lies behind many of the special characteristics which this study will describe.

The sources

Surrey is not rich in sources for its early history. It has nothing to set beside the charters which illuminate the early organisation of Kent, or those which provide so much topographical detail for the late Saxon see of Worcester. Even for the later Middle Ages there are relatively few large collections of estate documents: the fluidity of land-tenure, the lack of great local families and the constant pull of London were not conducive to the preservation of records. It is hardly surprising that most economic historians have passed Surrey by for richer pastures; yet its sources, scattered and fragmentary though they are, yield much of general interest.

The foundation charters of Chertsey and Farnham minsters[61] are among the earliest English diploma texts: although they only survive in later copies they seem to be basically genuine. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the remainder of the long Chertsey series, which are essentially false though probably containing some genuine information (cf below, pp30, 52). Two Kentish wills, that of Ealdorman Alfred in 871 × 889 and that of Brihtric and Ælfswith in 973 × 987,[62] include several Surrey manors. Among other pre-Conquest texts the only notable item is the Merstham charter of 947,[63] which survives in the original and includes a useful boundary-clause.

The Surrey section of Domesday Book has had, of course, its commentators, though they have rarely extended their interpretation much beyond the limits of the survey itself.[64] It is, in Round's words, 'neither long nor of special interest',[65] and it has no marked abnormalities. Here it is mainly used as a guide to relative economic development (ch 2) and for its data on churches (ch 5).

The most useful series of court rolls and accounts are those for the manors of Merton College (Thorncroft, Farleigh and Malden) and Westminster Abbey (Pyrford and Horsell). These rarely provide direct information for periods before the late 13th century, but they throw a great deal of light on the development of smallholdings and are much used in ch 3. Various classes among the public records, notably the Feet of Fines, have provided incidental information about colonisation, field-systems and smallholdings.

Certainly the most useful written sources are the many hundreds of private deeds from the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. These are scattered through many collections, the largest of which are in the British Library and the various Ancient Deeds classes in the Public Record Office. Monastic cartularies, especially those of Chertsey Abbey and Southwark Priory, provide much of the earlier material. Deeds give a different dimension to land-holding from that seen in manorial records, as well as containing a wealth of topographical detail for reconstructing the medieval agrarian landscape.

The landscape itself, of course, is in some ways the richest source of all. Except for its north-eastern third, now enveloped in suburbia, Surrey remains relatively rural, and early editions of the large-scale Ordnance Survey maps are reliable records of fields, roads and boundaries. Luckily these maps were compiled just before the parochial reorganisation of the 1870s, and hence preserve patterns of outliers which provide the key to territorial arrangements more than a thousand years old. Tithe maps, and intermittently surviving estate maps, take the picture back a little further. Several excavated medieval sites are used in ch 2 as evidence for settlement change. More important, architectural data are discussed in ch 5 for the light they throw on the origins of parish churches. Physical evidence alone, as is often observed, will rarely tell a clear story. A study such as this provides a good opportunity to test its value in filling out a relatively meagre written record.