

# **Surrey Archaeological Society Medieval Studies Forum Newsletter**

## **Number 16 – June 2020**

Welcome to the latest edition of the MedForum Newsletter, the first in quite some time it must be admitted. The reasons behind its overdue appearance are unsurprisingly more multifold than on previous occasions, with the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic having had a far-reaching impact upon the lives of everyone reading this. For the Editor, this has brought new challenges at work, but also the opportunity to focus less on initiating new projects and more on completing unfinished work — or even reading books that I have bought, glanced at briefly but never read properly!

On the subject of books, summaries of three recently-published titles about aspects of the medieval archaeology and history of Surrey are given; all are well worth investigating. Peter Balmer has contributed a valuable tour of the territorial terms used in respect of ecclesiastical institutions, and there are links to some excellent online resources to tide you over until we can access libraries again. In addition, there is the usual Annexe, this one taking a long, hard look at the evidence for early medieval settlements in historic and modern Surrey, plus a revised version of the research guide compiled in association with the Medieval Landscape day held pre-lockdown in March.

Contributions of any length and subject matter are always sought for the future Newsletters. Likewise information about any online events or new publications is welcomed, and can be disseminated much more quickly via email to MedForum members if appropriate.

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## THE TERRITORIAL HIERARCHY OF THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH IN SURREY

*Peter Balmer*

The principal levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Surrey in the Middle Ages were: diocese, archdeaconry, deanery (sometimes referred to as rural deanery to distinguish the post from the dean of a cathedral or college), and parish. Above the diocese, which in Surrey's case was Winchester, was the province of Canterbury, responsible for eighteen dioceses in England and Wales (this number dating from the foundation of the bishopric of Ely in 1109, and the re-formation of St Asaph as the fourth Welsh see in 1143). However, the archbishop of Canterbury had little role in the diocese of Winchester except when the see was vacant (and in the parishes which were so-called "archbishop's peculiars", for which see below). Above the archbishop was the papacy, but the Pope had little direct impact in Surrey; nominations for bishop were the Pope's responsibility, but few royal candidates were unsuccessful in the Middle Ages.

The **diocese**, i.e. the territory in which pastoral care was presided over by a bishop, may well have originated in England as coterminous with kingdoms or sub-kingdoms at a time when boundaries were not fixed. The inclusion of at least parts of Surrey in Winchester diocese may date from the period after the mid-seventh century, when some of the later county were under the control of Wessex. A dispute of the boundary with the diocese of London appears to have been resolved in 704/5. A new diocese of Sherborne was created in the western part of Wessex in 705, and further new dioceses were created by Edward the Elder in 909 (Crediton, Ramsbury, Wells), but in neither sub-division was Surrey affected.

As part of their pastoral role, only bishops were able to ordain priests (and lesser orders – deacons, subdeacons, acolytes). If the diocesan bishop were absent, ordinations were carried out by another bishop, termed a suffragan, who was often either a bishop absent from an Irish diocese or a bishop whose nominal see was beyond the boundaries of Latin Christendom, often in areas that were within the orbit of the Orthodox Church after the Great Schism of 1054.

Bishops of Winchester were often absent as most also filled important political or diplomatic roles. Under such circumstances, particularly if the bishop were abroad, his most important deputy would be his vicar-general, responsible for the administration of the diocese, a more full-time role than that of suffragan bishop. The bishop's church, where his throne (*cathedra*) was located, was the cathedral, but the church was the responsibility of the prior (in the case of Winchester, which was a monastic cathedral; other cathedrals served by secular canons were headed by the dean). The function of the bishop required him to travel throughout his diocese, which is one reason he did not spend a great deal of time at his cathedral. The tendency to be elsewhere was sometimes reinforced by strained relations between the bishop and the prior. Despite this, nearly all the major building campaigns at Winchester Cathedral seem to have been initiated by the bishop.

The Bishop of Winchester's estates were spread across south central England, some beyond the boundaries of the later medieval diocese, including some with significant residences where bishops often spent time. The Winchester estates were well-known for being efficiently run, and the bishop's periodic presence may have aided this. The estates were the source of the bishop's great wealth. According to the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, the Bishop of Winchester has a net income of nearly £3,900, making him a major magnate, even though the pay of officials and the maintenance of residences

would have had to be met from this sum. In Surrey, the bishop's principal estate was the large manor of Farnham, with an important residence at Farnham Castle. Bishop Peter des Roches acquired Esher in 1233, where another residence was constructed. From the mid-twelfth century the bishops had a palace at Southwark, which when politics dominated the bishop's time was often his most frequented house. Together with the bishop's house at Bishops Sutton near Alresford, these residences provided an even spread of locations along the route from Winchester to London. The bishop also held a large estate at Beddington, probably in the ninth century and certainly in the tenth, but this had gone by the time of Domesday. Wherever the bishop was his correspondence on diocesan business would follow him, sometimes instructing an archdeacon to take actions.

The next level after the bishop in the hierarchy of pastoral care was the **archdeaconry**. Although archdeacons are known to have existed in the early Church, their emergence with defined territories in England probably occurred after the Norman Conquest. Winchester diocese was divided into two archdeaconries: Surrey and Winchester (by contrast, Lincoln diocese had nine). Winchester archdeaconry was responsible for about twice as many parishes as Surrey. Archdeacons were moderately well remunerated, the Archdeacon of Surrey receiving over £91 in 1535, derived principally from the great tithes (on cereals and hay) of Farnham parish (of which the archdeacon was the rector) and from a levy on parish priests in the archdeaconry. The Archdeacon of Winchester received rather less despite his larger territory. The payment to an archdeacon would in part have been required to meet the cost of staff; instructions from the bishops recorded in their registers were often addressed to "the archdeacon or his officer".

Below the archdeaconry was the **deanery** (or rural deanery). The Archdeacon of Surrey's area contained three deaneries: Stoke (referred to as Guildford in the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of 1291), Ewell, and Southwark. The Archdeaconry of Winchester had ten deaneries. Rural deans were probably a post-Conquest, or possibly late Anglo-Saxon-period innovation in England. It has been suggested (for example in both Manning and Bray and in E. W. Brayley's *History of Surrey*) that they originated as the territory of a priest supervising over a group of ten parishes on behalf of the bishop at a time when there were fewer parishes than had emerged by the later Middle Ages. However, the number of churches referred to in Domesday Book, despite the problems of interpreting the information in that source, coupled with the great variability nationally in the size of deaneries, would seem to make that unlikely. The Surrey deaneries' boundaries bear little relationship to those of hundreds, unlike in some parts of eastern England.

Deaneries appear to have declined in relative importance over time. That nomination and dismissal of rural deans was matter for the Archdeacon of Surrey and not the Bishop of Winchester was made clear in the arbitration of a dispute about wills in 1346. Manning and Bray place the declining role of rural deans at the expense of the archdeacons rather earlier, in the reign of Henry III (1207–72). By the time of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in 1535, it is not possible to identify which incumbents in Surrey held the post of rural dean, or if any payment was made for the role, even in the deaneries of Ewell and Southwark for which the *Valor* contains some of the most detailed information on parish incomes in the country. In Dorset, however, very unusually, each of the five deans is named at the head of the entry for their respective deaneries. Each was paid 9s 4d, which makes clear that their role was very minor. (For comparison, the Archdeacon of Dorset received £82; the average income of a parish priest in Surrey was over £14.) The parishes in which the Dorset deans were incumbents were not necessarily those from which their deanery took its title.

In Surrey, there was a large part of another deanery that fell outside the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Winchester: the deanery of Croydon, consisting of parishes which were “peculiar” of the Archbishop of Canterbury. These parishes were scattered around the county: Barnes, Burstow, Charlwood, Cheam, Croydon, East Horsley, Merstham, Newington, and Wimbledon (with its chapels at Mortlake and Putney). In addition, the deanery contained the Middlesex parishes of Harrow (with its chapels at Pinner and Tokyngton) and Hayes (with its chapel of Norwood). In both counties, these were usually places where the archbishop had a significant estate. The deanery of Croydon eventually ceased with the abolition of the archbishop’s peculiars in 1845 (at which date Croydon became part of the diocese of Canterbury, together with the neighbouring parish of Addington where the archbishops had acquired a house).

The final ubiquitous tier was the **parish**, the basic territorial unit of pastoral care (the only extra-parochial place in Surrey being the precinct of Waverley Abbey). Parishes varied greatly in size and wealth. The income of the incumbent in 1535 was under £5 in Farleigh and in Addington, but over £91 in Kingston, although the vicar of Kingston would have had to support a greater establishment. Incumbent priests were either vicars, where the great tithes (on cereals and hay) were appropriated by an ecclesiastical institution, most commonly a monastery, or a rector who held all the tithes. Some 40% of all Surrey parishes were appropriated by 1535. In over a further quarter the right to present the priest (the advowson) was held by an ecclesiastical institution or senior cleric. In most of the rest, the priest was presented by the lord of the manor.

When the boundaries of parishes became fixed is an unresolved question. It is likely to have been after canon law determined unambiguously that tithes were the property of the parish priest rather than the bishop (except when the bishop had granted that they could be appropriated), thus linking fixed boundaries to income. The legal position was most clearly synthesised in the *Summa Decretorum* of Rufinus in the late 1150s. This was also the period after which few new parishes were created. Henceforward it became the norm to guard existing rights against new aspirants to parish status. This did not mean that parishes could not disappear, although this happened less in Surrey than in some other parts of the country. Surrey examples of lost parishes are Burgh and Preston, both absorbed by Banstead, and Waddington, which became part of Coulsdon. The establishment of fixed boundaries, sometimes linked to the complexity of manorial holdings, may also have played a part in the large number of detached parts of parishes, especially but not only in the south of the county. It is difficult to imagine that parishioners can always have attended their own churches. Penge, for example, was a detached part of Battersea parish; by the time of the bishop’s visitation of 1725, the inhabitants were said to attend Beckenham church, and it seems likely that this may have occurred earlier.

The boundaries and privileges of parishes are also complicated by the question of chapels. Later foundations nearly always had the status of chapel rather than church. But not all chapels were late foundations; important early churches held other foundations within their orbit to subordinate status (usually until the nineteenth century). The chapels of Farnham (Elstead, Frensham, Seale, as well as Bentley in Hampshire) and Kingston (East Molesey, Petersham, Richmond, Thames Ditton) are examples. The extent to which chapels acquired their own fixed territories, whether or not these were referred to as parishes, seems to have varied. Only Horne among Surrey chapelries is shown explicitly in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* to have its own right to tithes (although the chantry investigators of 1547 said it

had a stipendiary priest supported by the rector of Bletchingley, which would place it more in line with chapels elsewhere; it only separated from Bletchingley parish by Act of Parliament in 1705).

Where a chapel has a surviving medieval font, implying baptismal rights (such as Thames Ditton or Thursley) or is known to have had burial rights (such as Haslemere), there is a strong suggestion that it had a fixed territory. Similarly, there is an implication that chapels effectively had their own parishes when their burial or baptismal registers date from very soon after the first institution of register in the 1530s (such as at Elstead or Seale).

An indication that not all chapels were parochial is that the chantry investigators of 1547 were required to look at “free chapels” as well as chantries. Oakwood is referred to as a free chapel; it survived but did not acquire a parish. The only other Surrey reference to being a free chapel is for the Lovekyn Chapel in Kingston, which had certainly originated as a chantry but had ceased this function by the 1540s; it became a school a few years later. Other chapels-of-ease were included in 1547: Ripley originated as a hospital chapel, and survived as a chapel-of-ease in Send parish; Bagshot was a chapel-of-ease with a chantry function in Windlesham parish, and disappeared; Frimley, in Ash parish, had a similarly mixed role but survived, with baptismal registers dating from 1590. A few chapels were called parish churches in 1547 — Horsell, Pirbright, Thames Ditton — but this is probably not significant, the term only appearing randomly for chapels when the commissioners have identified endowments for e.g. altar candles. There were other chapels of uncertain status that had ceased before the mid-sixteenth century, such as Catteshall and Hurtmore chapels in Godalming parish, known from the Salisbury survey of 1220, or Westhumble chapel in Mickleham parish where a ruin survives. Others that were neither parochial nor private probably included Felbridge, Hooley, Kingswood, and Sutton (in Woking). Doubtless there were others of which evidence has not yet come to light.

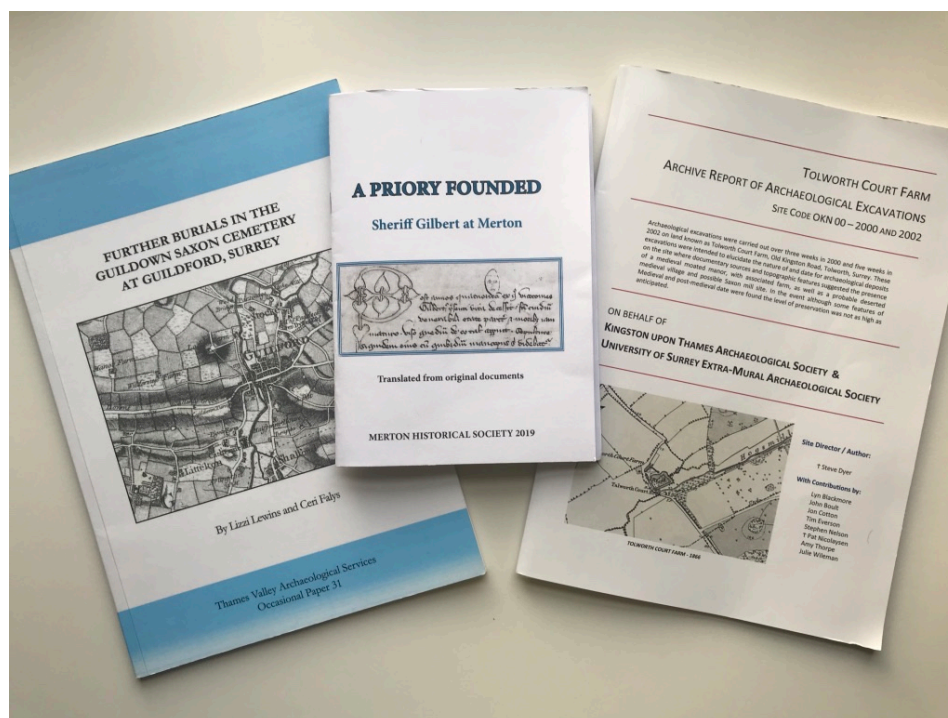
A footnote is provided by Hatcham, a manor that was in Surrey but which belonged ecclesiastically to the parish of Deptford in Kent (diocese of Rochester, archdeaconry of Rochester, deanery of Dartford). Medieval boundaries were not always tidy.



*ABOVE: This sturdy early 19th-century pillar formerly marked the boundary between the parishes of St Mary's Rotherhithe (Surrey) and St Paul's Deptford (mostly in Kent but including Hatcham in Surrey). It stood at a place where the parish boundary also formed the county boundary between Surrey and Kent from the Middle Ages until 1889. It was moved a short distance to its present location beside the Thames Path in 1988.*

## RECENT BOOKS ABOUT MEDIEVAL SURREY

*Rob Briggs*



*A Priory Founded: Sheriff Gilbert at Merton*, translated by Simon Neal, Tom O' Donnell, Gaynor Taylor and Keith Penny, introduction by Peter Hopkins ([?]Morden: Merton Historical Society, 2019). ISBN 978-1-903899-78-6. Stapled booklet, 44 pages, 5 images from original manuscript, 3 in colour. Price: £4.00 (MHS Members: £3.20).

The subject of this booklet is an extraordinary quartet of Latin texts preserved in a 14th- or 15th-century manuscript produced at Merton Priory and now held at the College of Arms in London. The theme common to them is Gilbert, Norman founder of Merton Priory as well as Sheriff of Surrey (and Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire). All would appear to be of 12th-century origin: the earliest written in or shortly after 1125 (the year of Gilbert's death), the latest – and lengthiest, called here 'In Praise of Sheriff Gilbert' – apparently of the period 1150–67. They are testament to the flourishing of a vibrant literary culture at Merton in what was then still a young (if well-connected) monastic community. It does prompt contemplation of what we have we lost from other Norman-era monastic foundations in Surrey.

Editions of the four texts along with some commentary were published in an academic journal article by Prof Marvin L. Colker in 1970, but for the most part they have not become as well known as they ought to be. Few people have the skills necessary to translate lengthy Latin texts, let alone ones recognised to consist of such difficult prose, so the initiative to commission and publish accessible translations of them is a most commendable enterprise. Peter Hopkins' introductory essay is excellent, providing the reader with the context of Merton Priory's foundation and early life, and highlighting the main features of the texts. Particular interest derives from the topographical details supplied about early to mid-12th-century Merton: Gilbert's clearly substantial house, the lack of a church with burial ground before the 1120s (contrary to the implication of Domesday Book), and the first and second sites of the

priory. All in all, this booklet makes an important contribution to our understanding of Merton and indeed Surrey in the 12th century.

*For further details about the booklet, and instructions on how to purchase a copy, visit the Merton Historical Society website at <http://mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/a-priory-founded-sheriff-gilbert-at-merton/>, or write to the Publications Secretary, Merton Historical Society, 57 Templecombe Way, Morden, Surrey SM4 4JF.*

**Steve Dyer, revised by Stephen Nelson, with contributions by others, *Tolworth Court Farm: Archive Report of Archaeological Excavations, Site Code OKN 00 – 2000 and 2002* (Kingston upon Thames: Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society, 2019). ISBN 978-1-5272-4043-8. Paperback, 44 pages, 36 colour and black & white figures. Price £7.**

Two seasons of excavations under the direction of the late Steve Dyer were undertaken in and around the medieval moated site at Tolworth Court Farm to the south-east of present-day Tolworth in 2000 and 2002. He completed the drafting of a final report in 2011, which seems to have formed the basis of a *London Archaeologist* article by Heather Forrester summarising the excavation results that was published in the same year. However, as an understandable consequence of Dyer's death, the report was not able to be finalised for publication to the timescale originally envisaged. Thankfully, due largely to fresh input from Steve Nelson, the report has now been published.

As is to be expected, the report initially focuses on setting the site in context, notably by means of an excellent review of the historical testimony for Tolworth authored by Julie Wiseman. For the most part, the report is generously illustrated throughout, helping to bring to life the excavations and some of the finds made in the course of them. An exception to this is the section on pottery fabrics and forms written by Lyn Blackmore and Amy Thorpe. For medievalists, what marks out this assessment is its integration of both the Surrey type series devised by Phil Jones (albeit citing his 1998 *Collections* article rather than the more recent revisionary work embodied in the Medforum's own guide booklets) and the MOLA fabric codes based on ceramics from London; normally only one or the other is used in discussions of medieval pottery assemblages from the historic county area. The resultant account is thorough if not the easiest to follow, but in a way this befits material recovered from a site at which very few securely dated features were found. Overall, this is exemplary "rescue", revision and publication of a final report of a hitherto-unpublished amateur archaeological research excavation, of which there must be many more in Surrey. Let it be therefore a model for others to emulate.

*Enquiries about how to purchase a copy can be directed to the Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society via email; [kutas.archaeology@gmail.com](mailto:kutas.archaeology@gmail.com).*



Lizzi Lewins and Ceri Falys, *Further Burials in the Guildown Saxon Cemetery at Guildford, Surrey*, Thames Valley Archaeological Services Occasional Paper, 31 (Reading: Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 2019). ISBN 978-1-911228-32-5. Paperback, 46 pages, 13 colour line drawings, 21 colour plates. Price £7.

This is a very welcome published version of the final report of the results of a small-scale excavation conducted in December 2016 on land to the rear of No. 12 Guildown Avenue, immediately west of the site of the Guildown early medieval cemetery. Unsurprisingly, further inhumation burials were found. Summaries of the results of the excavation and post-excavation work have appeared in the *Bulletin*, but here a much greater volume of evidence and analysis is presented. The opening sections on the archaeological features and finds are relatively brief, inevitably so given the small number of graves uncovered and the paucity of the furnishing of the ones that contained artefacts. By contrast, a substantial proportion of the report is devoted to detailed analysis of the human remains, which will be of greatest value to osteoarchaeologists, but provides a wealth of fascinating details for the non-specialist as well. Surely the greatest triumphs of the post-excavation analysis are presented in the shorter sections that follow: the results of radiocarbon dating and, more unusually for Surrey, stable isotope analysis of bones and dental enamel from three of the burials. The former revealed a broad date-range (8th to 11th centuries CE), the latter a common non-local origin (most likely Cornwall). The implications of these findings are among those considered in the concluding discussion, although the far south-western origins of all three of the sampled sets of human remains still awaits a satisfactory explanation.

*The report can be purchased from Thames Valley Archaeological Services; consult the TVAS Publications webpage at <http://tvas.co.uk/publications.html> for further details.*

## FORTHCOMING MEDIEVAL STUDIES FORUM EVENT

This year's planned summer visit to Midhurst and Cowdray was postponed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we hope that circumstances will have improved sufficiently for the following meeting to go ahead towards the end of the year.

### **Medieval Pottery study day**

**Saturday 5th December 2020**

**St Catherine's village hall, Guildford**

A study day focused on medieval pottery, from its production through to its analysis in the present day. The programme is not yet finalised and much hinges on the public health advice in place around the time of the event, so please make a note of the date of the meeting and expect further information in due course.



## ONLINE RESOURCES: CBA HANDBOOKS + MEMS LISTS

Attendees of March's Medieval Landscape study day-cum-workshop at the Surrey History Centre will have received a follow-up guide, put together by the Surrey Historic Environment Record, containing links to databases, digitised books and articles to assist with research into aspects of the county's historic rural landscapes. For those who were not able to attend the day, a slightly-updated version of the guide is being circulated to recipients of the Newsletter.

Since it was compiled, the following web-based resources have come to light or been launched, which may be of interest and use to readers.

### **Council for British Archaeology Practical Handbooks**

The CBA has made 13 of its Practical Handbooks available for download from its website ([link](#)). These cover a wide range of topics, with some being of more direct relevance to studying the Middle Ages than others. Of particular interest is Stephen Rippon's *Historic Landscape Analysis: Deciphering the Countryside* (2008 reprint), which covers a spectrum of approaches to researching past landscapes. Two Illustrated Glossaries, designed to help those recording churches and timber-framed buildings, are also recommended (although digital versions may be of less practical use on site). Lastly, *Garden Archaeology: A Handbook* (2012) has an overwhelmingly post-medieval focus, but because its author, the late Chris Currie, did much work in Surrey there informative discussions of several of the county's most important gardens and designed landscapes.

The PDFs can be downloaded for free (note that some of the files are very large in size) but a donation to the CBA of an amount of your choosing is recommended!

### **MEMSlib**

The MEMS Lockdown Library ([link](#)) has been produced by the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS) at the University of Kent. It is a student-led initiative and for that reason is primarily geared towards academic researchers, but as a one-stop shop of links to online resources it will also be of benefit to a much broader range of people. The website is unusually user-friendly, allowing easy navigation to pages cataloguing resources on specific topics (and separated between Medieval or Early Modern studies), from Manuscript Studies to History of Art. If for no other reason than casual interest, a visitor to MEMSlib cannot help but be impressed by the wealth of resources that can be found online and that have been collated by the team behind the website.