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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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The earliest of the excavations reported on in this volume (chapter 2) will be 20 years old by the time it is published. It was the first substantial work prompted by the publication of *Historic Towns in Surrey* (O'Connell 1977), which itself was the first result to appear in print of the establishment of salaried archaeological field officer coverage for Surrey. The development of professional archaeology and excavation within Surrey's historic towns has been closely interlinked ever since; it is, therefore, very appropriate that the first collected volume devoted to work by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU) should be on this subject.

Archaeological Field Officers were first appointed in 1975, and were responsible to the County Archaeologist (a post itself first established in 1972); the posts were funded by the Department of the Environment (DoE) and administered by the Surrey Archaeological Society. In 1979 this latter responsibility was taken over by Surrey County Council. In the late 1980s a significant growth in developer funding led to an enlargement in staff, and an effective separation of SCAU and its work (essentially project based for specific clients) from that of the Principal (County) Archaeologist and his team. These processes were accelerated by the introduction of the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG 16) in 1991; the division was formalized in 1992, and more recently emphasized by SCAU's move to a separate base, although it remains part of SCC's Environment Department.

It is against this administrative background that the work reported on in this volume has proceeded. The work at London Street, Chertsey, in 1977 was funded by the DoE, but all the other excavations were carried out with developer funding. This was generally obtained outside of any clear financial obligation imposed through the planning system (ie pre-PPG 16), and the funds did not, generally, prove adequate to finance the full post-excavation programme. The completion of the reports owes much to unpaid contributions from both within and outside SCAU. The idea of a volume devoted to work in medieval towns was first mooted in 1991 when almost all the contributions were quite close to completion. It was never envisaged, given the variety of circumstances and personnel, that the various reports would be standardized in form to any degree. There has, nevertheless, been a considerable amount of work required to integrate the reports into a reasonably coherent whole, to update them where essential, and to take account of the editorial and referencing requirements of the Society. Completion of these tasks has proved possible only due to the financial support of Surrey County Council and English Heritage.

Production of this volume would have been impossible without the continuity in organization and support of the work which implementation by a single organization has made possible. The full implementation of PPG 16 is leading to a more regular consideration of archaeological needs as development arises, and, in theory, should ensure that an adequate programme of work is carried out and published. Whether this results in a real advance in knowledge or merely an increase in information may depend on the extent to which competitive tendering leads to fragmentation of responsibility for carrying out the work.

The sites of historic towns in Surrey are shown in figure 1.1. The reports in this volume relate to work carried out by SCAU within the historic towns of Chertsey, Dorking, Farnham and Godalming. No work carried out from 1994 onwards has been considered for inclusion, although excavations up to 1997 have been referred to where appropriate. This largely explains the omission of Guildford, where surprisingly little had been done prior to 1994. Lack of activity also explains the omission of Bletchingley, Haslemere and Leatherhead. At Reigate considerable work was carried out in the town centre in 1987–8; although much of the report has been written some significant elements are still incomplete. For this reason, and because its inclusion would have

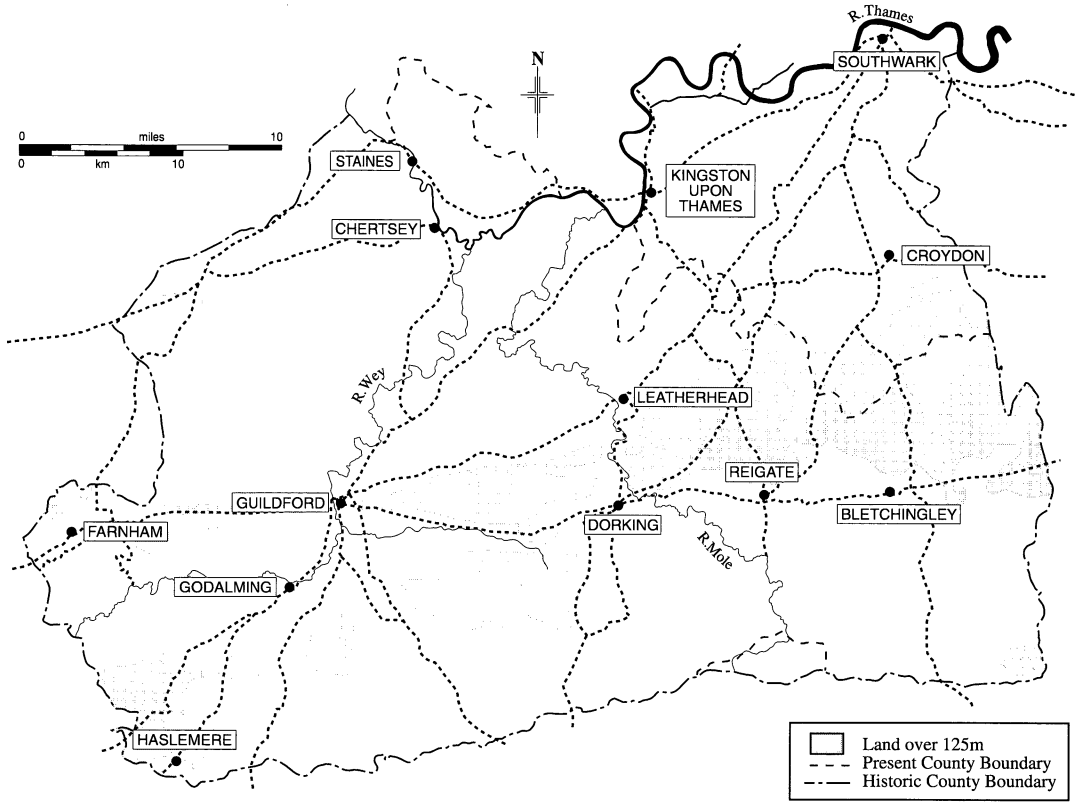

Fig 1.1 Medieval towns in Surrey. The principal routeways, as shown on 18th century maps, are also shown

made this volume extremely large, it has been excluded. Finally, the considerable body of work carried out in Staines stands apart from the present reports, both because the town lay in old Middlesex rather than historic Surrey and because it is the subject of a separate programme of publication funded by English Heritage.

Full acknowledgements are given with the individual site reports. A more general debt of gratitude must be remembered to English Heritage and Surrey County Council for enabling the volume to be completed. Suzanne Huson undertook much of the integration of the reports and compilation of the bibliography. Particular thanks must, however, be extended to Dr David Bird, Principal Archaeologist, Surrey County Council, throughout the period in which work took place, without whose dedication and perseverance very little would have been achieved, and whose contribution in academic advice and general support has underpinned the progress of the reports.

The illustrations are by SCAU (pottery by Phil Jones, the remainder largely by Giles Pattison) with the following exceptions: figs 4.3, 4.16–4.18 by David and Audrey Graham; figs 4.5 – 4.9 by Nicholas Riall; fig 4.15 by David Williams.