

Discussion and conclusion

From documentary sources alone we can suggest that from at least the first half of the 9th century through to the late 11th century Kingston was a significant Royal Estate centre. The land administered from this estate centre, probably the hundreds of Kingston and Elmbridge, may also have formed the territory of an early Minster church.

Clearly, the earliest Saxon activity for which we have firm archaeological evidence was not within the 'central Kingston island' which was to become the core of the medieval and modern town. The earliest settlement evidence, dating perhaps from 400 to 700, is from the much smaller but slightly higher 'South Lane island' to the south. Contemporary activity, probably an agricultural settlement, is evidenced from east of the 'central Kingston island' on slightly higher ground toward the Fairfield. By at least the 10th or 11th century, however, we can suggest on sculptural evidence that a church had been established on the 'central Kingston island', on the site of the existing parish church. Some time before this the settlement on the 'South Lane island' was abandoned while broadly contemporary activity on the 'central Kingston island', in the form of the cutting of a property boundary and later drainage ditches, is evidenced. It seems likely that it was the foundation

37. *Op cit* fn 36.

of Kingston church which led to a settlement shift from one island to the other.

If we accept that the existing parish church of All Saints is likely to be the successor to a Saxon church, possibly a Minster, then what interpretation do we place on the potentially late Saxon chapel of St. Mary? It could be that the existence of a church actually occasioned the creation of St. Mary's as a subsidiary. Both buildings perhaps forming part of a complex of ecclesiastical and secular buildings at the core of the Royal Estate Centre. In this context it is even possible that St. Mary's originated as a masonry hall rather than as an ecclesiastical building³⁷. Certainly this building was regarded as very special by the people of Kingston as is shown by its retention as an anachronistic lateral lady chapel through every major remodelling of the parish church, the antiquarian records, and the general dismay recorded in the town at its destruction in 1730.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Dr Christopher Philpotts for his assistance in researching this paper, to Richard Morris at the CBA and my colleague Andrew Harris for their ideas on the interpretation of St. Mary's Chapel, to Tim Everson at Kingston Local Studies Library and Ken Whittaker of English Heritage for his comments on the text.

Excavations and post-excavation work

City of London. Museum of London Archaeology Service, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (0171-410 2200).

Croydon & District, processing and cataloguing of excavated and museum collections every Tuesday throughout the year. Archaeological reference collection of fabric types, domestic animal bones, clay tobacco pipes and glass ware also available for comparative work. Enquiries to Jim Davison, 28 Blenheim Park Road, South Croydon, CR2 6BB.

Greater London (except north-east and south-east London), by Museum of London Archaeology Service. Excavations and processing in all areas. General enquiries to MOLAS, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (0171-410 2200).

Borough of Greenwich. Cataloguing of excavated and other archaeological material, the majority from sites in the borough. For further information contact Greenwich Borough Museum, 232 Plumstead High Street, London SE18 1JT (0181-855 3240).

Hammersmith & Fulham, by Fulham Archaeological Rescue Group. Processing of material from Fulham Palace. Tuesdays, 7.45 p.m.-10 p.m. at Fulham Palace, Bishop's Avenue, Fulham Palace Road, SW6. Contact Keith Whitehouse, 86 Clancarty Road, SW6 (0171-731 4498).

Kingston, by Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society. Rescue sites in the town centre. Enquiries to Kingston Heritage Centre, Fairfield Road, Kingston (0181-546 5386).

Surrey, by Surrey County Archaeological Unit. Enquiries to Rob Poulton, Archaeological Unit Manager, Old Library Headquarters, 25 West Street, Dorking, RH4 1DE (01306-886 466).

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