



Fig. 1: 1, Winchester Palace; 2, St Withun's House; 3, House of Christ Church Canterbury; 4, House of Waverley Abbey; 5, House of Beaulieu Abbey; 6, Tabard, House of Hyde Abbey; 7, House of Lewes Priory; 8, Battle Inn; 9, House of St Augustine's Abbey; 10; House rented by Arnold Savage; 11, Suffolk Place; 12, Clinton's Inn, earlier house of Merton Priory; 13, House west of Lewes' Inn; 14, Topping's Wharf; 15, Hastings Inn; 16, Poynnyng's Inn; 17, Cobhams Inn; 18, Ferrer's Place; 19, Fastolf's house.

## The 'great' houses of medieval

### Southwark

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Medieval Southwark has got rather a bad reputation and suffers from comparison with the City. Partly this is a projection backwards from the 19th and early 20th centuries when it was industrialised and densely populated, but it also probably derives from the fact that it had more than its fair share of prisons and the red-light district on Bankside. Indeed, this reputation already clung to it in the late 18th century; writing in 1795, Concannon and Morgan said of Southwark that 'the last 50 years have contributed to its good name much more in proportion than any earlier period'.<sup>1</sup>

What I would like to argue is that the situation was rather different, and that in the Middle Ages Southwark had a lot of 'great' houses of the ecclesiastical and lay élite.

The most famous of them, and the only one with anything surviving above

ground, is Winchester Palace (Fig. 1, no. 1), where the west wall of the Great Hall and a little of the south wall still stands. This was the town house of the Bishop of Winchester, who acquired it in the 1140s, probably from a man called Orgar the Rich<sup>2</sup> after whom St Martin's Orgar in the City is named. The bishop also obtained the manorial lordship of the area from Bermondsey Priory at about the same time, to form the manor which was later known as the Clink.<sup>3</sup> This was unique in Southwark, but in Lambeth the Bishop of Rochester and the Archbishop of Canterbury had their town houses and Rochester held the manor probably from 1088 to 1197 and the archbishop from 1197 onwards, and Canterbury still has his town house there of course.

To the south of Winchester Palace lay the town house of the Cathedral Priory of St Swithun of Winchester

(Fig. 1, no. 2); this was acquired by the bishop from William de Giselham, and he granted it to the Priory as their town house in 1299.<sup>4</sup> Canterbury Cathedral Priory also had a town house in Southwark on the south side of Tooley Street (Fig. 1, no. 3); they acquired the land on which it stood from various landowners in the last decade of the 12th and the early 13th centuries.<sup>5</sup>

Besides Cathedral Priors, a number of monasteries also had town houses in Southwark. Waverley Abbey had a house in what is now Park Street (Fig. 1, no. 4), which they acquired in 1309 by a grant of Peter le Constable of Guildford,<sup>6</sup> though this may have only been an addition to property which Waverley already owned, since, in a deed of 1230x49, it abutted on a property of Waverley Abbey.<sup>7</sup> Further south, fronting onto Borough High Street (Fig. 4, no. 5), Beaulieu Abbey in



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Hampshire had a town house which they acquired in 1274/5 from William de Saham, a judge in the Kings' Bench,<sup>8</sup> but again there are suggestions that they had part of the property somewhat earlier, especially an entry in the Bermondsey Annals,<sup>9</sup> which seems to relate to this site, which says that Bermondsey had come to an agreement with an abbey about it in 1249; the annalist had written Westminster but this had been erased with nothing to replace it.

Another famous town house was the Tabard, owned by Hyde Abbey (Fig. 1, no. 6) just outside Winchester, and made famous by Chaucer; Hyde acquired it in 1306 from William de Ludgershall, but it seems likely that Ludgershall acquired the land on the abbey's behalf in 1302.<sup>10</sup> Sussex monasteries also had town houses in Southwark; Lewes had a house on the south side of Tooley Street under what

is now London Bridge Station (Fig. 1, no. 7), which John de Warenne, Earl of Surrey, acquired some time before 1274 and granted to Lewes in 1277.<sup>11</sup> Further along Tooley Street but on the north side (Fig. 1, no. 8) Battle Abbey had a house built on land they acquired from various people in the early 13th century; it seems they may have had grander intentions because they acquired a lot of other property in this area at the time which did not form part of the town house, but which they granted away c. 1239x45 and later formed the manor of the Maze. This was never a true manor, just a large landholding; there is no evidence that Battle was trying to establish manorial overlordship like Winchester.<sup>12</sup>

Kent's contribution was a house belonging to St Augustine's Abbey Canterbury, which lay on the riverside just east of St Olave's church (now Olaf House) (Fig. 1, no. 9). They acquired a

large property in 1215 from Reginald de Cornhill, who was in prison and needed the money to get out. Like Battle, they sold much of it in 1245, but they retained the part on which their house was built.<sup>13</sup>

The obvious omission from this list is Merton, a leading Augustinian priory. Merton did have a house in Southwark, on the riverside north of Battle Inn (Fig. 1, no. 12) which they said was given to them by Ailwin Child, but they sold it off between 1150 and 1167, though they did reserve a right to use it as a town house.<sup>14</sup> It may be that Merton was near enough to London for them not to think it necessary to have a town house.

Most of these houses were acquired before the Act of Mortmain, and all were still held by the ecclesiastical body at the Dissolution, except for Merton which had sold theirs off before Mortmain. Monastic houses were active in the land market before that Act, both acquiring and selling property; after it, because mortmain made acquisition more difficult, they rarely sold land, so in a way it fossilised monastic land holdings.

Lay houses are rather more difficult; first it is hard to know where to draw the line between grand and ordinary houses. For example, Sir Arnold Savage rented a house on the east side of the Bridge House, on the north side of Tooley Street (Fig. 1, no. 10), from at least 1404, and his widow continued to occupy it until her death in 1413,<sup>15</sup> but since it belonged to the Bridge it is unlikely it was very grand. Second, lay owners, unlike ecclesiastical institutions, were mortal and often died without male heirs, or even worse, without heirs at all, so lay grand houses had much shorter life histories.

The most famous one is the house of the Brandon Dukes of Suffolk (Fig. 1, no. 11) whose house, now known as either Suffolk or Southwark Palace, was drawn by Wyngaerde and is famous as an early example of a renaissance great house. The Brandons had been in Southwark since the late 1450s,<sup>16</sup> but there is no evidence that they acquired the land on which this house was built until the early years of the 16th century,<sup>17</sup> and what evidence we have shows that Charles Brandon, who was created Duke of Suffolk by Henry VIII,

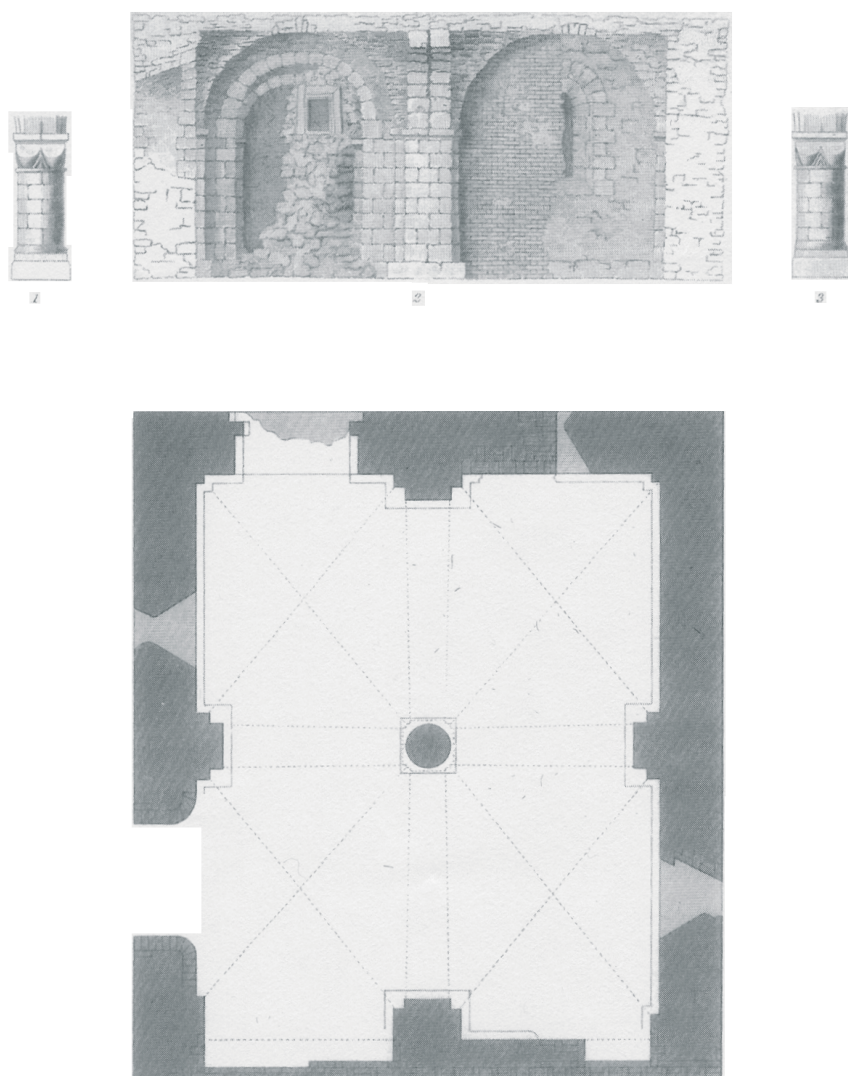


Fig. 2: plan of the stone building later the house of Lewes Priory

was building it in the second decade of the 16th century.<sup>18</sup> He was forced to grant it to the king in 1536 and it was being demolished in 1558,<sup>19</sup> a good example of the short life span of secular great houses.

Sir John Fastolf built a house on the north side of Tooley Street (Fig. 1, no. 19) in the 1440s. Fastolf had fought in France under Henry V and VI, which made his fortune. When he died in 1459, a very old man, he had no children, and disputes about his will went on for 10 years; a number of people lived in the house after his death, including the Duchess of York (Edward IV's mother), the Earl of Wiltshire, and Stephen Scrope who was Fastolf's stepson, which illustrates the problems which could arise when there was no clear heir. William Wayneflete, Bishop of Winchester, acquired it in the 1470s as Fastolf's executor, and actually lived in it at times, even though he had Winchester Palace at the other end of Southwark. He sold it in 1484 to the Earl of Nottingham, after which there is no evidence that it was a great house, though it is not known when it was demolished.<sup>20</sup>

The site which had briefly housed Merton's inn later became Clintonsinne (Fig. 1, no. 12). It may have been granted to John de Clinton in 1367,<sup>21</sup> and was certainly in the Clintons' possession by 1392,<sup>22</sup> but they sold it off in 1425.<sup>23</sup> Going the other way, from lay to ecclesiastical, was the house which later belonged to St Swithun's Priory (Fig. 1, no. 2), which had belonged to William de Braose, one of Edward I's knights in the 1270s,<sup>24</sup> and also the house which belonged to Lewes Priory (Fig. 1, no. 7), on which part of a 12th-century stone house was discovered when London Bridge Station was built in the 19th century; though this is often referred to as Lewes' house, it predates Lewes' ownership of the site by a century or more (Figs 2 and 3). Immediately west of this (Fig. 1, no. 13) another 12th-century building was found in the 19th century, but in neither case do we know who built them. On the opposite side of Tooley Street (Fig. 1, no. 14) the foundation of yet another 12th-century stone building was found in the 1970s; this site probably belonged to the Badlesmere family in the 13th century, an important Kentish

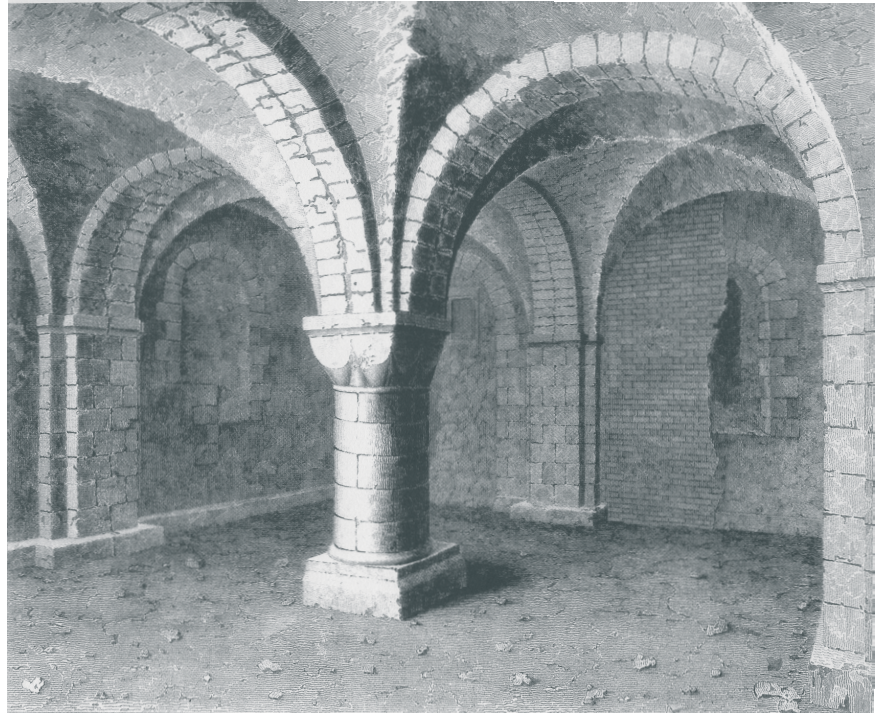


Fig. 3: drawing of undercroft of stone building later the house of Lewes Priory

family who go back into the 12th century so they may have been the builders.<sup>25</sup>

On the other side of Park Street from St Swithun's house (Fig. 1, no. 15) was another great house, which in the middle of the 13th century belonged to William Moyne, who bought the house in 1259.<sup>26</sup> He was a supporter of Henry III in the Montfortian period, as a result of which the London mob came and looted his house in 1265, and are said to have removed property worth 200 marks, a very large sum.<sup>27</sup> William's son sold it in 1276 to Agnes de Valence,<sup>28</sup> and it descended from her to the Hastings family, being known as Hastings Inn. In 1354 it was held by Lord Clinton, but only in the right of his wife, and descended in the Hastings family until the mid-15th century, when it seems to have been abandoned and escheated to the Bishop of Winchester as manorial lord,<sup>29</sup> and was later known as Deadman's Place.

On the east side of Borough High Street (Fig. 1, no. 16), the Poyning's family had a house which they acquired in 1368,<sup>30</sup> and was known as Poyning's Inn; in 1450 they were heavily involved in Cade's Revolt, but seem to have escaped unscathed from it. One of them married Elizabeth Paston and so appears in the Paston Letters, though they seem to have had a violent dispute

with the Pastons; Elizabeth later married George Brown, who was executed by Richard III. The last Poynges holder died in 1521, when it descended to the Percies, Earls of Northumberland, who sold it in 1536,<sup>31</sup> but it had probably long ceased to be a grand house, since from at least 1517 it was rented by the Crown as an armoury.<sup>32</sup>

The Surrey family, the Cobhams of Lingfield, had a house in Southwark known as Cobhamsinne on the south side of the cemetery of Southwark Priory (Fig. 1, no. 17), which they acquired between 1348 and 1361 from John de Frenchingfield.<sup>33</sup> Their grandson, who founded Lingfield College, gave it to the College in 1431,<sup>34</sup> but the Cobhams seem to have retained control of it, and it was his daughter Margaret, wife of the Earl of Westmoreland, who actually passed it on to the College in 1453.<sup>35</sup> It was later occupied by St Saviour's Grammar School.

Between Waverley Abbey's house and that of Beaulieu (Fig. 1, no. 18), the Ormsbys had a house which they acquired in 1426;<sup>36</sup> the Ormsbys were a Lincolnshire family. It later belonged to Bouchier, Lord Ferrer, and was known as Ferrer's Place, though oddly in the early 16th century it is referred to as Ormsby Place. Ferrer may have held it in the right of his wife Elizabeth, but



how she was related to the Ormsbys (if indeed she was) is unknown and in 1501 an Ormsby was claiming it,<sup>37</sup> though Elizabeth, who died in 1498, instructed her executors to sell it,<sup>38</sup> and it seems to have gone down in the world after that. There may have been other lay great houses for which the evidence is less clear cut (see fn. 25).

Unfortunately, we can say little about most of the houses, since only Winchester Palace has left remains above ground,<sup>39</sup> few have been excavated<sup>40</sup> and for most, especially the secular ones, there is little documentary evidence. As we have seen, some of early ones were built in stone, and even Fastolf's house probably was,<sup>41</sup> but Brandon's house was built in brick with terracotta dressings,<sup>42</sup> and for most we do not know. Many of them lie back from the road, from which they are separated by a row of shops with an entry through a large gate, a pattern which also occurs in the City.<sup>43</sup> Most, probably all, had fairly extensive gardens; in a case in 1389 pear, apple, plum, nut and cherry trees are mentioned as growing in the garden of Lewes' house in Southwark.<sup>44</sup> They could also be used for administrative purposes; for example in 1434 and 1451 rents for Battle's property in Suffolk and Essex were payable at their Southwark house.<sup>45</sup>

It is notable that all the houses belonging to ecclesiastical bodies in Southwark belonged to houses in south-

east England lying south of the Thames. There has been much talk recently of rivers being unifiers rather than separators, and there is much truth in this, but they could also be barriers, perhaps psychological as much as practical. This is emphasised by the fact that no religious body from north of the Thames, with two minor exceptions, ever owned property in Southwark until the late 15th to early 16th centuries, when two Cambridge and one Oxford colleges acquired property there. This does not seem to affect secular lords as much, though many of them too had their caput south of the Thames.

One feature apparent in Fig. 1 is that there were no great houses in St George's parish before 1500. St George's was always the least urbanised of Southwark's parishes in the Middle Ages, and this stresses the urban nature of these houses, though some were at the margins of the settlement (Hasting's Inn and Sir John Fastolf's house). The Brandons built their house in Southwark, and may have been attracted by its semi-rural nature, since it was built adjoining their considerable holdings in St George's Field, and also abutting the demesne lands of the manor of the Clink, which they leased from the Bishop of Winchester; this suggests that it functioned as a 'hunting lodge' as well as a great house, but the Brandons had always been connected with the parish long before they built their house.

It has been suggested that with the rise of the public inns in Southwark in the later Middle Ages, it was less essential to have your own accommodation, and there may be some truth in this. Certainly by the 16th century most of the ecclesiastical houses had been leased out, and in 1532 the Abbot of Waverley arranged to meet someone at the *Pope's Head* in Borough High Street rather than at his house.<sup>46</sup> But secular lords were still acquiring houses in Southwark in the early 16th century, and Magdalen College felt it necessary to have a house in London for its President well into the 16th century, though they leased property for this including, for a short period, in the Close of Southwark Priory,<sup>47</sup> even though they owned considerable property in Southwark. However, by 1560 nearly all these houses had ceased to be grand. The only possible exceptions are St Swithun's House, which after the Dissolution was owned by the Bishop of Rochester, but his first attempts to occupy it were thwarted,<sup>48</sup> and St Augustine's House, which was sold off by the Crown to the St Legers, but it is not clear that they lived there though it was known as St Leger's Place, and they sold it off in 1574.<sup>49</sup> There was even one new great house, for the Montagues settled in the Priors' Lodgings in Southwark Priory and probably rebuilt them, but that only lasted to the first years of the 17th century.

1. M. Concannon and A. Morgan *History and Antiquities of the Parish of St Saviour's, Southwark*.

2. NA E40/6112.

3. *Ibid.*

4. NA C143/30/1.

5. Cant. Archives S299, S301-4, S309 and Register B f234; NA CP25/1 225/3 53.

6. NA C143/80/6 and E371/70 rot 14.

7. Cartulary of St Thomas' Hospital deed 145.

8. Seldon Soc Vol 20, p. 116.

9. Annals of Bermondsey Abbey; Rolls Series, *Annales Monastici* Vol 111 from BL Harl Ms 231.

10. BL Harley Ms 1761 f167-9, CPR 1301-7 p. 436 and NA CP25/1 227/28 117.

11. NA E40/4074, /4001 and /3628, CP25/1 226/19 227 and BL Cott. Ms Vesp. F XB f194 and f63.

12. BL Add. Ms 6344, Huntingdon Lib. California BA 29.

13. BL Cott. Ms Claud D X f238-241, CP25/1 225/8 16.

14. BL Cott. Ms Cleo C VII f58 and 87.

15. CLRO Bridge House Rental Vol 1 f8.

16. CCR 1454-61 p. 292 and 300.

17. NA CP40/968 f354.

18. NA C1/626/17-9.

19. NA PROB 11/ Welles f317.

20. Magdalen College, Oxford Southwark deeds passim; 'Annals' in *Wars of England in France* Rolls Series 1864 ed. J. Stevenson Vol 2 ii p. 771; *Paston Letters* ed. Davis p. 216; Magdalen College Oxford 149/5 and 149/15.

21. NA CP25/1 230/55 21.

22. NA CP40/525 f245d.

23. CCR 1422-9 p. 319 and 322.

24. HRO 11M59 159298.

25. 'Early medieval stone buildings in Southwark' *SLAS News* 76 (Dec 1998) 4-5, reprinted in *SyAS Bulletin* 330 (June 1999) 1-3.

26. NA CP25/1 226/17 135.

27. NA Just 1/1207 f4.

28. NA CP40/17 f63.

29. NA KB27/767 f92d.

30. NA CP25/1 230/54 121.

31. 'Abstract of Surrey Feet of Fines 1509-58' ed. C.A.F. Meekings *Sy Rec Soc* 19 (1946) 244; NA CP40/1085 f353.

32. Letters and Papers 1519-21 p. 409 *et al.*

33. Cal Inqu OM Vol 11 59 and CCR 1360-64 p. 231.

34. CPR 1429-36 p. 146.

35. NA CP25/1 232/74 47.

36. NA CP25/1 231/79 15.

37. NA CP40/958 f315d.

38. NA PROB 11/ Horne f259.

39. D. Seeley, C. Philpotts and M. Samuel *Winchester Palace: excavations at the Southwark residence of the Bishops of Winchester* (2006).

40. D. Bluer 'Excavations at Abbots Lane, Southwark' *London Archaeol* 7, no 3 (1993) 59-66.

41. Magdalen College Oxford 168/17.

42. *London Archaeol* 11, no 6 (2006) 148.

43. J. Schofield *The Building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire* (1984) 88.

44. NA CP40/512 f446.

45. ESRO from Huntingdon Lib California 1351 and 1631.

46. Letters and Papers Hen VIII Vol 5 1765.

47. Apart from Winchester Palace, fragments of the stone building west of Lewes' House were excavated in 1992, see Heather Knight *Aspects of medieval and later Southwark* (2002) 18.

48. NA C1/1431/45 and 48.

49. NA E40/15015 and 15027.