

# LONDON AND SOUTHWARK IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY AND LATER

## A NEGLECTED REFERENCE

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### 1

The charter which Frithuwald ‘of the province of the men of Surrey, and sub-king of Wulfhere, king of the Mercians’ issued in favour of Chertsey abbey in 672–4<sup>1</sup> is of interest for several reasons. It is very early; the oldest authentic English charter dates only from 669. It contains the sole reference to West Saxon *provinciae* (Surrey and Sonning);<sup>2</sup> districts better recorded elsewhere in England and also known as *regiones*, into which the original Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were sub-divided before the creation of the shires by the mid-8th century in Wessex and by the mid-10th in other areas. It testifies to a Mercian dominion over Surrey which is not otherwise recorded and which, though of only short duration, clearly demonstrates the vitality of the rising Middle Kingdom and, even at this comparatively early date, its pre-eminence in southern England. But of still more particular interest, the charter also features the first post-Roman reference to the ‘port’ of London—some sixty years earlier than Bede’s—as well as what looks very like the first mention, though not by name, of Southwark.

This, clearly, is a matter of some interest, not least because the standard texts on early London and Southwark are found to have nothing at all to say on the subject. It is a strange omission, not to be explained on the grounds of selectivity: 7th century London is hardly that well documented. Nor is the text of the charter particularly inaccessible, and since 1955 a translation has been widely available in the authoritative *English Historical Documents*.<sup>3</sup> The reason can only lie—and the point is worth making—in that fundamental deficiency of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, the continuing absence of a single, systematic edition of the early English charters and even more of a comprehensive index to their contents.<sup>4</sup> For the obscurity arises in part from the simple accident that London receives a comparatively brief allusion in a document primarily concerned with Chertsey abbey’s more extensive local holdings. The reference clearly calls for advertisement as a neglected piece of evidence which contributes to the understanding of an obscure but important phase of London’s development, and which offers a significant clue to the character of Southwark at the same period.

The purpose of Frithuwald’s charter was to convey to Eorcenwold, abbot of

Chertsey since its foundation in 666, 205 hides of land (*manentes*) on his own account, and also to confirm the possession of a total of 300 hides. All but ten of these lay more or less locally along the Thames between Sonning (Berks) and Molesey, and included Chertsey itself, Thorpe, Egham, Cobham, Chobham, Woodham and Weybridge.<sup>5</sup> The remaining land was not so local, and lay some twenty miles downstream. It is defined by the following passage, translated by Dr. Whitelock:

‘Of the same land, however, a separate part, of ten hides is by the port of London, where ships come to land, on the same river on the southern side by the public way.’

One notable feature here is that the location of the ten hides is only indirectly indicated in relation to other, more or less adjacent, places or landmarks: London itself, the Thames and a public road. No distinctive place-name is supplied. This signal defect presents an immediate problem, and has doubtless had its part to play in the obscurity and neglect of the whole issue. But even the Latin text itself is less than precise, so that meaning is more than usually dependent on punctuation. It reads:

‘Est tamen de eadem terra pars semota manencium decem iuxta portum Londonie ubi naves applicant super idem flumen in meridiana parte iuxta viam publicam.’

Depending on the placing of commas, the passage could (just) be made to mean that the land was by the port of London, where ships tie up on the same river, on the south side (*i.e.* of London) by the public road. In this case the public way could be taken to denote Thames Street, a matter of some interest since the real antiquity of that thoroughfare stands in need of demonstration.<sup>6</sup> But ‘by the port of London’ might be thought an unduly quaint way of describing land adjacent to Thames Street, even in the 7th century, and Dr. Whitelock’s less contrived translation seems preferable. Besides, the facts are that all the other property mentioned in the charter is in Surrey to which, by his own definition, Frithuwald’s authority was confined.

The allusion, then, is to the south side of the river and here, given the highly inhospitable character of the early Surrey shore of the Thames in the vicinity of London, the choice of location for these ten hides is quite restricted. For several miles in either direction the low lying coastal strip at the foot of the gravel river terrace was composed of mudflats intersected by tidal channels. Only at Southwark could the river be approached on the relatively firmer footing provided by a series of sandbanks, themselves only slightly above river level, which projected northward from the gravels.<sup>7</sup> These topographical constraints largely determined the site of the Roman bridge, and hence of London itself, and they still applied in the post-Roman period. Indeed, because of a general rise in tidal levels at that date, they were almost certainly accentuated; with the exception of Southwark, and perhaps of the still more isolated site of Bermondsey, land to the east and west seems to have been largely under water until the later medieval period.<sup>8</sup>

There must therefore be a strong presumption that any worthwhile grant of land on the south side of the Thames near London in the 7th century was at the exceptional site of Southwark, not least when a public road is also specified. In fact, two Roman roads are now known to have converged just south of the bridgehead at Southwark. One of these led south to Watling Street, the main route from north Kent.<sup>9</sup> The other led south-west, apparently in the direction of Lambeth, and since there is reason for supposing that the two lines of Watling Street north and south of the Thames may originally have continued beyond their surviving alignments to a ford between Westminster and Lambeth<sup>10</sup>, a possible alternative location for the Chertsey property arises. But the case for Lambeth, which lay at the western extremity of the marshy coastal strip,<sup>11</sup> is difficult to sustain. There is clear evidence that the road from Southwark went out of use in the late Roman period and—like any extension of Watling Street to Lambeth—was not even approximately followed by any known medieval successor.<sup>12</sup> It might also be doubted whether land at Lambeth would be close enough to London to be usefully described as ‘by’ (*iuxta*) the port, in the same sense that it was also described as ‘by’ the public road (*iuxta viam publicam*). Besides, the description of the ten hides as lying on the south side of the river, though not impossible in a general sense, would clearly be less appropriate at a point where, as at Lambeth, the Thames flows from south to north. Vague as the terms of this description may seem to us, it must be assumed that they were adequate for their purpose in 672–4, and by far the likeliest identification for a property distinguishable by these means remains the former Roman site of Southwark, directly opposite London.

## 2

The earliest documentary reference to Southwark by name dates from the early 10th century,<sup>13</sup> so that the proposed identification would in some sense bring forward the history of London’s southern suburb by some two and a half centuries. It will clearly be necessary to assess how well this information fits in with the more familiar sources, and what it might add to our knowledge of London and Southwark generally. First, however, it is important to test the validity of the ‘London passage’ in the context of the charter itself. About the document as a whole there seems little doubt. Though the original no longer exists, and its text survives as a copy in the earliest of the Chertsey cartularies, compiled in the third quarter of the 13th century and probably within a few years of 1260,<sup>14</sup> for all general purposes the charter has invariably been regarded as authentic.<sup>15</sup> On that basis Dr. Whitelock printed it as the oldest of the representative series of land grants selected for her volume of *English Historical Documents*.<sup>16</sup> Sir Frank Stenton, who discussed the document often, believed the ancient formulas at its core to show that it descends from a text of the 7th century.<sup>17</sup> The English Place-name Society’s volume for Surrey, of which Stenton was a co-author, pronounced that there is no reason why the text should not be used for ‘historical purposes’.<sup>18</sup> This, at least, is the case so far as

concerns the four principal abbey estates of Chertsey, Thorpe, Egham and Cobham, for which there is ample corroborative evidence elsewhere. But no-one has ventured any specific comment upon the ten hides near London; do these general imprimaturs necessarily cover them too?

Initially, at least, there is reason for some caution. Despite his confidence in the charter's basic authenticity, Stenton also remarked that the text is 'distended with spurious matter'.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately he did not particularise, but one all too obvious instance of this is the detailed English description of the bounds of the four principal estates, which is appended to the Latin text of Frithuwald's grant. There is no doubt that this is of much later date than the 7th century—it is probably of at least the 9th century<sup>20</sup>—and it is clear too that the text of the bounds has been interpolated with material which could only have been supplied in the mid-13th: roughly the date, that is, of the extant cartulary copy.<sup>21</sup> That being so, we need to be reasonably certain before placing any reliance upon it that the 'London passage' was not another, subtler, interpolation made at any time up to *c.* 1260. The mention of a property near London might very well be worth slipping into a copy, or recopy, of the original text, whether for the purposes of completeness, antiquarian interest, deliberate fraud or through simple misunderstanding. Indeed, this possibility is strengthened by the fact that several of the other charters in the same cartulary, which purportedly date from the time of Frithuwald onwards, are undoubtedly forgeries,<sup>22</sup> three of them to the extent that they contain long lists of properties<sup>23</sup>. These, it has been suggested, include all the place-names which the forger knew had at any time been associated with the abbey,<sup>24</sup> and for which there is no independent corroboration. Neither, for that matter, is there any corroboration, in Chertsey sources or elsewhere, for the abbey's possession of property on the Surrey shore of the Thames. No mention is to be found in the Domesday survey of Surrey in 1086: in the whole of *Brixistan* (Brixton) hundred, which extended along the river from the Kent border to Kew, the abbot of Chertsey was accredited only with land in Lower Tooting.<sup>25</sup>

Despite these hazards there is nevertheless a fair chance that the 'London passage' is authentic. The absence of any later reference to nearby property in Surrey might equally well mean that Chertsey's possession of the ten hides was indeed as early as it purports to be, but that it was also of brief duration. It is particularly interesting, for example, that not one of the several recognized fabrications, even of those with compendious lists of place-names, has anything to say of the ten hides. Least of all does a charter of Alfred which recites some of the identificatory material relating to the four principal estates which features in the charter of 672–4.<sup>26</sup> This material itself might well be an interpolation, like the English bounds for the four estates also appended to Frithuwald's charter: even so, it would seem to show that when the fabricated charters were fabricated—evidently no earlier than than the 10th century—Chertsey no longer had any interest in the property near London such as might prompt its inclusion in them. But the most positive grounds for accepting the authenticity of the 'London passage' are to be found in the text of the charter itself. In the first place there is no obvious infelicity in the placing of the passage in the

context of the provisions of the grant. It is well integrated with the text, if only because all the properties mentioned adjoin the Thames, so that there is an apparent coherence to the whole document.

More decisive, however, is the very absence of a distinctive place-name, and the presence instead of periphrastic references to readily recognizable landmarks. For this procedure is entirely characteristic of the early English charters in that even very large estates were often conveyed by no other name than that of a river by which they lay, or of some other prominent feature.<sup>27</sup> The use of place-names obviously regarded as permanent only became common in the course of the 8th century, and routine by the 10th, as a reflection of an increasing density of settlement which called for a more precise and particular mode of definition.<sup>28</sup> The implications of this conclusion for the early character of Southwark will be assessed shortly: the immediate point is that the tenor of the 'London passage' is as consistent as other features of the charter's text with an authentic grant of late 7th century date. Had the passage been a later interpolation, a greater degree of exactitude might have been expected; certainly a place-name—such as Southwark possessed, at least from the early 10th century—would have been supplied, just as the spurious Chertsey charters supplied them in such abundance elsewhere. As it is, the absence of this modest requisite is undoubtedly the best warranty of the antiquity of the ten hides, and also no doubt for the early date and irrevocability of their loss.

For the question arises how the abbey came to be parted from such a property near London, whose value must have been increasingly more apparent with the passing of time. If that question could be answered, our confidence in the ten hides could be enhanced still further. Fortunately, more than one explanation is available. The most obvious is that in the late 9th century Chertsey was totally destroyed by the Danes and its lands devastated, so that it came to be virtually refounded towards the mid-10th century.<sup>29</sup> Under these conditions it is more than probable that many of the original endowments, especially those more remote from the abbey, were lost for good. Moreover, London in particular was occupied by the Danes between 871 and 886; and, even if the ten hides were subsequently restored, renewed Danish activity in the area of the southern bridgehead in the early 11th century shows that the Surrey bank was completely at the invaders' mercy.<sup>30</sup> From at least 1051, the manor of Southwark was in the possession of the Anglo-Danish earl Godwin, a man not inhibited by exaggerated respect for monastic integrity.<sup>31</sup> An alternative explanation, not inconsistent with this, will be offered presently. But it is one thing to explain the loss of monastic property, and quite another to account for Chertsey's subsequent silence on the numerous occasions when the opportunity arose, as in the case of the abbey's later charters—genuine or fabricated—to rehearse their legitimate claims. In this connexion it is interesting to note that by the beginning of the 11th century Chertsey appears to have acquired another local base on the Thames, this time in London itself. A charter of Ethelred II, dated *c.* 1006–12, confirmed to the abbey a bequest by his priest, Wulfstan, of an enclosure on the river in the western part of the city close to the harbour called Fish Hithe (*Fischuthe*), together with mooring and market rights.<sup>32</sup> Fish

Wharf, recorded in 1291, lay near the foot of Trig Lane,<sup>33</sup> and although the form of Ethelred's charter is suspect, its substance is to some extent confirmed by the fact that in 1258–9 the abbots of Chertsey were said to have neglected and abandoned the rights which they had held up to forty years previously at Broken Wharf,<sup>34</sup> immediately downstream of Fish Wharf. This was presumably the property—as no other is recorded in the city at this time—for which Edward the Confessor confirmed the abbey in *sac* and *soc* over land and men within London in a genuine writ of 1058–66.<sup>35</sup> It would be rash to conclude that Ethelred's charter was in any formal sense compensating Chertsey for the loss of an estate across the river which it had held since the 7th century, though this is clearly not impossible. Such privileges were rare and closely restricted prerogatives;<sup>36</sup> Wulfstan could only have received them from the king, and could hardly have disposed of them without his active consent. In any event, the transaction offers an explanation of how the memory of an earlier property might be allowed to sink into oblivion on the acquisition of a new site, manifestly better place and privileged.

### 3

The conclusion that the London passage in Frithuwald's charter is authentic, and that the ten hides which it conveyed to Chertsey in 672–4 were subsequently lost in the unsettled conditions of the late Saxon period, now calls for some consideration of the 7th century context to which it belongs. What can it tell of early London and Southwark? So far as London is concerned, it cannot but help to clarify what little is already known. The most striking contribution is in the reference to London as a port, for it predates by some sixty years Bede's celebrated description of the city as a market (*emporium*) of many peoples coming to it by land and sea.<sup>37</sup> In fact, with the exception of Pope Gregory's unembroidered allusion to the *civitas* in his correspondence with Augustine at the turn of the 6th and 7th centuries,<sup>38</sup> Frithuwald's charter would seem to embody the earliest documentary reference to London since the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* annal for 457.<sup>39</sup>

This designation of London as a port complements two other historical sources of roughly similar date. It provides valuable corroboration for Bede's mention of the sale of a slave to a Frisian merchant in 679, itself a purely incidental reference made two generations later which only tenuously implies seaborne trade at second hand.<sup>40</sup> It also makes an interesting comparison with the laws of the Kentish kings Hlothere and Eadric which refer to the existence in the London of the 680s of a royal hall where, in the presence of the royal reeve, Kentish merchants could receive warranty of the goods they purchased in the city.<sup>41</sup> These laws say nothing directly of London as a port, beyond what may be implied by the name *Lundenwic* (*cf.* Ipswich and *Hamwih*) but—unless it is supposed that the Roman bridge still stood intact almost three centuries after its builders had departed—it could be inferred that this particular trade was essentially conducted by sea rather than by land. In any case, it is quite clear that

the level of that trade was considerable, and the presence of the reeve—an official active at Lincoln as early as *c.* 630<sup>42</sup>—indicates that the Kentish kings were alive to the need for its regulation, and doubtless for its taxation also. The charter of 672–4 thus reinforces Bede's earlier notice and the Kentish laws; together, the three references demonstrate that by the 670s and 680s London already anticipated the thriving port described by Bede in his own day, and implied within a decade after the 730s by a series of charters in which Aethelbald of Mercia conferred monies derived from tolls collected by permanent *exactores* from specified shiploads.<sup>43</sup>

A similar conclusion is also suggested by the import of the London passage for Chertsey itself. An area of land sufficient to support ten peasant families,<sup>44</sup> or to render an equivalent value, might at first seem a negligible endowment compared with the 290 hides which the charter also confirms in the more immediate neighbourhood of the abbey. Yet its very remoteness from those central estates seems also to reflect the contemporary importance of London; to a far-sighted monastic sponsor it might well be obvious that as the city's prosperity developed it would increase the value of such a holding with it, either as a source of rents or as a base for commercial activity by the abbey itself, twenty miles upstream. Such a sponsor was certainly present. Eorcenwold, the first abbot of Chertsey before his election to the see of London in 675, and the addressee of Frithuwald's charter, was equally clearly influential in the foundation of Barking abbey in Essex, which also held land in and close to London, and whose first abbess was his sister.<sup>45</sup> Though apparently not the formal, or at least the exclusive, founder of either house, he emerges with much of the credit, and his memory was especially cherished by Londoners until the Reformation. Little else is known of him, except for his outstanding piety, but one suspects that there was more to him than that. The location of these two monastic foundations on either side of London might alone suggest, however, that the city was a significant factor in the choice of sites, and that Eorcenwold was in some sense operating from there. Both houses, moreover, lay on different sides of the Thames, and in the early years of their foundation Mercia was both temporarily in control of Surrey, as Frithuwald's charter shows, and also sufficiently effective in London to have the bishopric at its disposal *c.* 670.<sup>46</sup> No doubt these conditions assisted Eorcenwold: Wulfhere of Mercia who sanctioned Frithuwald's charter to Chertsey is also recorded as having given a hide near London to Barking.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps, too, Eorcenwold was helped in part by that ancient authority which London appears to have exercised over an area greater than Middlesex, for it was presumably the early inclusion of Surrey within the diocese of London that enabled Ine of Wessex to describe him in *c.* 690 as his own bishop.<sup>48</sup> At all events, Eorcenwold's influence, however derived, evidently extended over a wide region of which London can be seen as an effective political centre, while the endowment of Chertsey with ten hides near the port, and of Barking with ten hides in the city, and with a hide nearby in addition to lands at Battersea<sup>49</sup> would emphasize the economic importance of London within that region.

How long London had enjoyed this status as an international port, together

with its regional pre-eminence, is a question which the charter raises rather than answers. The very casualness of its reference to the port 'where ships tie up' clearly implies that these facilities were no new thing and were already well established in 672–4. It perceptibly increases the possibility that the London which, as late as four years after Augustine's arrival in England, Pope Gregory still regarded as an appropriate seat for an archbishopric, and in which Ethelberht of Kent established St. Paul's cathedral in 604, was something more than a sequestered pulpit.

#### 4

From the discussion of the London context of Frithuwald's charter it is now time to turn to the ten hides themselves. The case for attributing them to Southwark has already been stated: elsewhere on the Surrey shore near London the terrain lay at least part of the time below water and, for the same reason, the only public thoroughfare known to have approached the river was the Roman road which led from Watling Street to the site of the southern bridgehead. It has also been noticed that the charter of 672–4 lacks an identificatory place-name, a general characteristic of charters of this date and symptomatic of a relative sparsity of settlement for which any greater particularity was unnecessary. Now that principle, if applied to Southwark, would itself seem to suggest that little development of any significance had yet occurred, and several other features of Frithuwald's charter would tend to a similar conclusion. Where Southwark lacks a name, a pointed contrast is provided by the availability of the names of Chertsey and Thorpe, manifestly remoter and more obscure places, at least by the standard of settlement evident in the Roman period and from the 11th century. Conversely the charter gives no hint that the grant of the ten hides was affected by any existing habitation: no account is taken of the presence of neighbours, of other hides or indeed of any human activity. It begins to look very much as if Chertsey was virtually first on the spot.<sup>50</sup> Altogether, the tendency of Frithuwald's charter is to cast doubt on the existence in 672–4 of any settlement of Southwark comparable with that of the Roman and Saxo-Norman periods. This, in itself, is hardly inconsistent with the absence of archaeological evidence for early Saxon activity.<sup>51</sup> One hesitates to overstress this last point in view of the comparable scarcity of such evidence from London, whose status at this period is so far only redeemed by documentary sources, or from later Saxon Southwark itself. But the fact remains that there is minimal positive evidence of any intensity of settlement in early Southwark, and that any supposition to the contrary rests partly on the knowledge of its considerable importance in the Roman and medieval periods, and partly on an assumed relationship with London.

The nature of that relationship is, however, crucially dependent on a factor of which, again, nothing is known at this period but which merits consideration in this context; the bridge which in the late Saxon period, as also in the Roman period, linked Southwark directly with London. Even if it was not deliberately



demolished, it is unlikely that the Roman bridge survived the 5th and 6th centuries. Certainly no bridge is mentioned in 672–4, although if one existed it would have offered a far more conspicuous and definitive landmark than any of those actually mentioned by Frithuwald's charter. But given the evidence, already reviewed, of the geographical limitations of the Southwark site, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the existence, or non-existence, of a bridge was of vital importance. Without a bridge, it is difficult to see how the site could have amounted to much more than a *cul de sac* in a swamp, close to London but decisively separated from it, except perhaps for the limited convenience of a ferry. For such a place there could have been little local competition on the part of those traders anxious to participate in the growing activity of late 7th century London, although the potential value of the site and its limited accessibility might well be regarded in a more favourable light by the provident founders of a monastery which lay some 20 miles further upstream. But with a bridge, such as certainly existed by c. 1000,<sup>52</sup> the potential of the site would be immediately confirmed both as an integral southern outpost of London and—as was to be apparent by 1086—as an urban centre in its own right, serving its own district.<sup>53</sup> Both these roles are reflected in the various forms of the name Southwark, when it eventually appears in the early 10th century. The earliest, *Suthringa geweorch*, denotes 'defensive works of the men of Surrey'<sup>54</sup> in much the same sense that Frithuwald claimed to be sub-king of the men of Surrey. Later forms, the Domesday *Sudwerca*,<sup>55</sup> and the *Suthgewearke* of the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*,<sup>56</sup> representing the direct ancestors of the modern name, reflect the relation of the defences to London.

Does the occurrence of *Suthringa geweorch* imply that these conditions had now been met by the provision of a bridge? There is good reason to suppose that this was the case. The first appearance of *Suthringa geweorch* is made in the 'Burghal Hidage', a document of the 910s which sets out the totals of personnel required for the defence of a number of fortified places, almost all south of the Thames, in accordance with a formula which stipulates a given number of men for a given length of defensive circuit.<sup>57</sup> This list appears to enumerate those places which had recently been fortified, or re-fortified, during the first, West Saxon, phase of Alfred's campaigns against the Danes, and in several instances has been confirmed by archaeological evidence. The first occurrence of the name Southwark in this document itself strongly suggests that the site of the southern bridgehead was included in this programme, as does the fact that the stipulated defensive circuit of some 2225m compares very closely with what is known of the extent of Roman settlement there.<sup>58</sup> So too does the element *geweorc*,<sup>59</sup> and the name is of a kind to have arisen from some very specific and fundamental innovation, such as might supplant an earlier settlement or name, if any had existed.

The likeliest context for such a development is one which preceded the Burghal Hidage by at most a couple of decades; the restoration of London described in very general terms by contemporary writers,<sup>60</sup> and specifically discussed by Alfred at a council held at Chelsea in 898 or 899, some thirteen years after his recapture of the city from the Danes. The evidence for this

council and its consequences for London have been discussed recently,<sup>61</sup> but the main conclusions can be summarised. Two of the participants of the conference, the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of Worcester, both prominent associates of the king, received adjacent plots of land with mooring rights at Queenhithe. In the case of Bishop Wæferth, this grant supplemented an earlier award in 889 of market rights on the 'trading shore' at a plot whose dimensions suggest identification with an *insula* immediately north of Queenhithe. Between them, the two grants were clearly concerned with the promotion of riverborne trade. The early name of the Queenhithe (*Aetheredes hyd*) was shared by Ethelred, ealdorman of Mercia, who was entrusted by Alfred with the custody of London and who also attended the Chelsea conference. But the activities of neither Ethelred nor Wæferth were confined to London, for at a similar date both men were also concerned with the fortification of Worcester and with the establishment there of a market on terms which resemble those at Queenhithe. These developments underline the characteristic interdependence of the military and economic elements of Alfred's programme of urban renewal, in which London can thus be shown to have shared. Of the purely military aspects of Alfred's restoration of London nothing specific is known, though contemporaries speak vaguely of the strengthening and garrisoning of the city. Such measures are unlikely to have omitted the securing of communications across the Thames, both because co-ordination between Mercia and Wessex was a vital feature of contemporary policy and because there was a particular need to contain the Danish settlement of East Anglia and to counter any recurrence of concerted action with raiders operating to the south of the river.

If these preoccupations provided the occasion for the defensive works at Southwark, it is still far from clear what precise purpose would have been served if they were not in fact accompanied by a bridge. They were too distant from London, across a river too wide to be controlled by shore defences alone, to benefit the city in particular or communications in general, and it remains to be shown that there was anything at Southwark itself to call for special protection. The probability is that the bridge and *burh* which presented such an effective barrier to Danish shipping in 1016 that the invaders had to dig a channel around the southern side of Southwark,<sup>62</sup> were both built as part of a single operation in *c.* 900. That probability approaches virtual certainty in the light of the special attention paid at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries to the securing of river crossings and the control of riverborn traffic. In 895 Alfred himself selected an unspecified place at which the river Lea could be blocked to prevent the Danes bringing out their ships, a stratagem achieved by the erection of two fortifications (*tu geweorc*) on the two sides of the river.<sup>63</sup> A similar, and much more widespread, concern can be seen in a series of fortifications, recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which were undertaken between 907 and 920. Unlike the great majority of sites listed in the Burghal Hidage, these were all in Mercia and were established by the now familiar Ethelred of Mercia and his wife Aethelflaed, in concert with Edward the Elder and as an extension of Alfred's policy, to further contain and then to reduce the Danish occupation of

eastern Mercia.<sup>64</sup> In five cases, Hertford (912), Buckingham (914), Bedford (915), Stamford (918) and Nottingham (920), river crossings were secured on either side by protective *burhs*<sup>65</sup>. Except for Hertford and Buckingham, where fortification or settlement on either side was apparently novel, an existing *burh* was complemented by new defences opposite, where none had stood before. In the certain case of Nottingham a bridge was constructed between the two strongholds, and it is likely that the same was the case with the other four, though the names Bedford, Hertford and Stamford might suggest that their rivers were negotiable without further provision. But in each case it is clear that the basic requirement was a defensible crossing, with the further capacity for controlling the passage of ships.

There thus seems to be little difficulty in attributing the works at Southwark to the construction of a bridge across the Thames *c.* 900 as part of a military and economic renewal which applied to lowland England generally as well as to London in particular. No earlier occasion is recorded which compares in scope, scale and urgency with these developments, and before the reign of Alfred the Thames was, with brief exceptions, a political frontier, a condition which would have inhibited the establishment of permanent and over-accessible communications across it,<sup>66</sup> as it would also render its maintenance and operation uncertain. It is hard also to overlook an interesting comparison with Kingston, 15 miles upstream, which served as a frequent meeting place for the West Saxon royal council from the early 9th century, and as a crown-wearing place in the 10th.<sup>67</sup> As the Thames lay on the periphery of the West Saxon kingdom, such a site presumably offered some particular political advantage, possibly proximity to London. One further reason for the choice of Kingston was perhaps that, as its name shows, it was a prominent *villa regalis*, important enough to remain in royal hands throughout the Saxon period, and to give its name to the local hundred. In both these respects it signally contrasts with Southwark, but it was also favoured by the existence of a ford, by which the Thames could readily be crossed.<sup>68</sup> It may be then that the comparative importance of Kingston at a period when nothing is known of Southwark provides a further indication of the obscurity and remoteness of the latter site before *c.* 900. It is certainly notable too that after the 10th century much less is heard of Kingston generally and that, unlike Southwark, the town did not feature as a *burh* either in the Burghal Hidage or in the Domesday survey. These apparent changes in relative status may be merely coincidental but, like the evidence of Frithuwald's charter, they are at least consistent with a long period of minimal activity in early Southwark. They are also consistent with the evidence of major innovations in London at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries, in which the provision of a bridge would have restored to the Southwark site something of its former Roman function and status and, not least, given it a name so conspicuously lacking in 672–4.

## NOTES

1. The full Latin text is printed in W. de G. Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum* 1 (London 1885) No. 34. A modern translation appears in D. Whitelock *English*

*Historical Documents, 500–1042* (London 1955) No. 54, 440–1; (2nd ed., 1979) 479–80.

2. F. M. Stenton *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd ed., Oxford 1971) 294.

3. Whitelock (*loc. cit.* in Note 1). The document also

- escaped the present writer, who is indebted to Gustav Milne for the reference.
4. Two modern projects are attempting to supply this deficiency on a regional basis: the *Early Charters* series, published by Leicester University Press, which consists of summaries with some comment and references, and which so far includes (by H. P. R. Finberg) *The Early Charters of the West Midlands, and of Devon and Cornwall* (both 1961), *of Wessex* (1964); (by C. R. Hart) *of Eastern England* (1966); *of the Midlands and of Northern England* (both 1975); and (by M. Gelling) *of the Thames Valley* (1979). A more elaborate (and protracted) treatment is the *Anglo-Saxon Charters* series, sponsored by the British Academy and the Royal Historical Society, of which *Rochester* ed. A. Campbell (London 1973) and *Burton Abbey* ed. P. M. Sawyer (London 1979) have so far appeared. Until these series are concluded, P. H. Sawyer *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an annotated list and bibliography* (London 1968) provides the most complete single coverage, with abstracts and comment: The present charter is no. 1165. Unfortunately, however, the reference to London is not included in the abstract (or in the index), a defect only very recently redressed by Margaret Gelling's *Early Charters of the Thames Valley* (see above) No. 309.
  5. This information derives from a parenthesis in the Latin text (see Whitelock *loc. cit.* in Note 1) and may be a later interpolation. It is however consistent with other evidence.
  6. See T. Dyson in C. Hill, M. Millett and T. Blegg, *The Roman Riverside Wall and Monumental Arch in London*, London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc. Special Paper No. 3 (1980) 9–10.
  7. *Southwark Excavations 1972–4* ed. J. Bird, A. H. Graham, H. Sheldon and P. Townend, London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc. & Surrey Archaeol. Soc., Joint Publication No. 1 (1978) 1. 13–15, 19–20, and Figs. 2–4.
  8. *Ibid.* 47–8.
  9. *Ibid.* 22; Fig. 1 (Road 1).
  10. *Ibid.* 22, 25, 252–5 (Road 2).
  11. *Ibid.* Fig. 2.
  12. *Ibid.* 254–5.
  13. See below, p. 91.
  14. British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius A xiii (in which Frithuwald's charter appears on ff. 20v.–23). See *The Chertsey Abbey Cartularies* 2 (pt. 1) introd. C. A. F. Meekings, *Surrey Record Society* 12 (1958) xiv–xv.
  15. Sawyer (*op. cit.* in Note 4) No. 1165.
  16. *Loc. cit.* in Note 1.
  17. F. M. Stenton *Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period* (Oxford 1955) 29.
  18. J. E. B. Gover, A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-names of Surrey* English Place-name Society 11 (Cambridge 1934) xvi.
  19. Stenton (*loc. cit.* in Note 17).
  20. See below. Appended English bounds became common from the 9th and 10th centuries, partly as response to damage and confusion caused by Danish raids and invasion. For the particular plight of Chertsey, see below, p. 87.
  21. Meekings (*op. cit.* in Note 14), xv.
  22. These include Sawyer (*op. cit.* in Note 4) Nos. 69, 127, 285, 353, 1093, 1094–5, 1181 and 1477.
  23. *Ibid.* Nos. 420, 752, 1035.
  24. Gover, Mawer and Stenton (*op. cit.* in Note 18) 88.
- The fact that the surviving texts are spurious does not of course preclude the possibility that there was some original substance to the abbey's 'association' with these places.
25. *Victoria History of the Counties of England (VCH): Surrey* 1 (London 1902) 310, and map between pp. 294 and 295.
  26. Sawyer (*op. cit.* in Note 4) No. 353, dated 871–99. See now also Gelling (*op. cit.* in Note 4) No. 322.
  27. Stenton (*op. cit.* in Note 2) 285–6.
  28. F. M. Stenton 'The English Element in Place-Names' in *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England* ed. D. M. Stenton (Oxford 1970) 77–80.
  29. *VCH (Surrey)* 2 (London 1905) 55–6.
  30. See below, p. 92 and Note 62.
  31. D. J. Johnson *Southwark and the City* (Oxford 1969) 22 and n.7, 23. For Earl Godwin's character, see F. Barlow *Edward the Confessor* (London 1970) 89.
  32. Sawyer (*op. cit.* in Note 4) No. 940; J. Kemble *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* 7 (London 1845) No. 718 (pp. 353–5).
  33. City of London Records Office, Husting Roll 20(44): '... venellam per quam itur versus la Fywayrve . . .'; cf. H. R. 34(9.9): '... venella . . . versus le Fihswarf . . .' (1306) and H. R. 42(19) '... venella . . . per quam itur ad kayum . . . vocatum le Fishwarf' (1313). The lane, later Trig Lane, was the eastern boundary of the parish of St. Peter the less; the wharf would have lain to the east of it.
  34. *Cal. Charter Rolls 1257–1300*, p. 16; *Cal. Misc. Inquisitions*, 1 No. 246.
  35. F. E. Harmer *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (Manchester 1952) No. 43, 201ff.
  36. T. Dyson 'The terms 'quay' and 'wharf' and the early medieval London Waterfront' in *Waterfront Archaeology in Britain and Northern Europe* ed. G. Milne and B. Hobley, Council for British Archaeology (forthcoming).
  37. Bede *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ii.3.
  38. *Ibid.* i. 29.
  39. Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS. E. The nature and date of the ultimate source of this annal, as used by the synthetic Alfredian chronicle, is uncertain and may itself post-date the 7th century.
  40. Bede (*op. cit.* in Note 37) iv. 22. The date is established in the following chapter of the *History*.
  41. *The Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, ed. B. Thorpe, Record Commission 66 (1840) 14–15. *Hlothere and Eadric ruled Kent jointly—or separately—between late 684 and early 685*.
  42. Bede (*op. cit.* in Note 37) ii.16.
  43. Sawyer (*op. cit.* in Note 4) Nos. 86, 88, 98. They are in favour of Minster in Thanet (? 733), Rochester (734) and Worcester (743–5) respectively.
  44. Stenton (*op. cit.* in Note 2) 279.
  45. *VCH (Essex)* 2 (London 1907) 115.
  46. Bede (*op. cit.* in Note 37) iii. 7.
  47. Wulfhere's grant to Barking is recorded in a spurious, but not necessarily unfounded, charter of 677 (Sawyer, *op. cit.* in Note 4, No. 1246). Frithuwald's charter seems to show that King Egbert (of Kent, 664–673) founded Chertsey (*monasterium quod primo sub rege Egberto constructum est*). Presumably Wulfhere in some sense assumed Egbert's role when he took over control of Surrey in the interval after 660.
  48. Gover, Mawer and Stenton (*op. cit.* in Note 18), xiv and n.; Whitelock (*op. cit.* in Note 1) no. 32 (p. 399).

- For the origins of Surrey as part of a district which also included Middlesex see Gover, Mawer and Stenton, xiv–xv. In the 12th century Londoners claimed hunting rights in Surrey (C. N. L. Brooke, G. Keir and S. Reynolds 'Henry I's Charter for the City of London', *J. Soc. Archivists* 4 (1973) 576). The origin of this claim is likely to be of great antiquity.
49. See Note 47.
50. It might be noted here that the 'value of 1800 hides' accredited to Southwark in the Burghal Hidage (*Southwark Excavations* (*op. cit.* in Note 7, 48)) is not that of the area of the *burh* itself, but of a region (presumably Surrey, assessed at 1830 hides in 1042–66, and at 1750½ hides in 1130 (*VCH (Surrey)* i. 276–7) intended to provide one man from each of its 1800 hides towards the manning of the Southwark defences on the basis of four men to each pole (16½ ft) of wall. Thus the length of the Southwark defences can be calculated as
- $$\frac{1800}{4} \times 16.5 \text{ ft, i.e. } 7425 \text{ ft.,}$$
- which apparently conforms with the archaeological evidence for the extent of the Roman settlement.
51. *Southwark Excavations* (*op. cit.* in Note 7) 48.
52. *De Institutis Lundonie* (also known as Ethelred II, Code IV), Thorpe (*op. cit.* in Note 41) 127–9. A supposed reference to 'London Bridge' in 963–975 has recently been shown to relate to Northamptonshire (D. Hill, 'London Bridge: a reasonable doubt?' *Trans. London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* 27 (1976) 303–4).
53. Johnson (*op. cit.* in Note 31) 12–13; *VCH (Surrey)* i. 256. A significant number of Surrey properties also held land in London in 1086, and it is clear that city and suburb were regarded as indistinguishable for some purposes (Johnson *Ibid.* 13).
54. A. H. Smith *English Place-name Elements* 2, English Place-name Society, 26 (Cambridge 1956) 254.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 1016, 1052. The existing texts which records these events date from c. 1100 (see *loc. cit.* in Note 54).
57. D. Hill, 'The Burghal Hidage: the establishment of a text', *Medieval Archaeol.* 13 (1969) 84–92.
58. *Southwark Excavations* (*op. cit.* in Note 7), 48.
59. Cf. A. H. Smith (*loc. cit.* in Note 54). Note in particular 'Butterwork' in Lincoln: *butangeveorc* ('outside work').
60. *Asser's life of King Alfred*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (Oxford 1904), 69; *The Chronicle of Aethelweard*, ed. A. Campbell (London 1962), 46.
61. T. Dyson, 'Two Saxon Land Grants for Greenhithe' in *Collectanea Londiniensia: studies . . . presented to Ralph Merrifield*, ed. J. Bird, H. Chapman and J. Clark, London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc., Special Paper No. 2 (1978), 200–215.
62. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for 1016.
63. *Ibid.*, MS A.
64. See F. T. Wainwright 'Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians' in *The Anglo-Saxons, Studies . . . presented to Bruce Dickins* ed. P. Clemoes (London 1959) 53–70. Wainwright's case that the record of the Mercian contribution to these campaigns and expeditions was subsequently suppressed by Edward the Elder might help to explain the lack of more specific detail about developments in London, particularly in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.
65. These details are based on M. Biddle 'Towns', in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* ed. D. M. Wilson (London 1976) 135–6.
66. Cf. D. Johnson (*op. cit.* in Note 31) 5.
67. *VCH (Surrey)* 3 (London 1911) 487.
68. *Ibid.*