

Surrey Archaeological Society Medieval Studies Forum Newsletter

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Welcome to what will be the last edition of the *Medforum Newsletter*. The Committee has taken the decision that it does not serve its intended purposes of being an outlet for research done by Forum members and a means for drawing readers' attention to news of forthcoming events. We did this confident in the knowledge that there are alternative options available: research findings can be disseminated more effectively through presentations in Medforum meetings or written contributions to the Society's *Bulletin* and other publications, and news circulated via more frequent emails. So, a sad turn of events in some ways, but one that is more than compensated for by what else is already on offer.

This *Newsletter* presents the usual mix of contents: an appraisal of 13th-century legal records from a domestic-cum-secular material cultural perspective; news of a new database and scholarly article; and an introduction to a recently-published book that will be of value to many who research or take an interest in medieval Surrey and the wider region of South-East England. There is also a save the date notice for a conference happening in late November of this year.

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Later medieval material culture glimpsed through legal records: both in Rotherhithe

The talk given to the Medforum by Dr Ben Jervis on 'The Material Culture of Medieval Rural Households' in early December 2020, and its use of types of commonplace legal record as a window into late medieval material culture, set me thinking about similar sources pertaining to Surrey that might afford comparable insights. The county is fortunate to have had a range of later medieval textual sources made available as editions published by the Surrey Record Society. I trawled various volumes for suitable testimony, with varying degrees of success, before settling on the following records of two strikingly similar but apparently separate legal cases concerning arrays of items stolen from the house of Thomas de Hegham (*alias* Heyham) at Rotherhithe: one from the 1263 Surrey eyre (Stewart 2006, 13–16 [case no. 22]), the other from the 1268 eyre *de terre datis* (Stewart 2013, 18–19 [no. 50]). Together, these provide a wonderfully detailed picture of the sorts of things that could be found in (and stolen from) a house of someone of above-average wealth and status living in the hinterland of London in the later 13th century.

Who was Thomas de Hegham?

The following is by no means a thorough biography of Thomas, merely a set of facts about his adult life culled from edited medieval sources published by the Surrey Record Society or to be found online. Thomas and Isabella, his wife, were granted a messuage, land and tenements in Rotherhithe, Bermondsey, Camberwell and Hatcham in 1268 (Hart 1858, 124–26). The sources at the centre of this essay make clear that he had been associated with Rotherhithe at least for over a decade prior, and in 1267–68 Thomas was in dispute with Ada, widow of Laurence St Michael over lands and rent in Rotherhithe and Camberwell (Stewart 2013, 160). An undated feoffment for 'a moiety of 3 yards of land ... lying in Sixacres' in Bermondsey parish cites abuttals onto the 'next land of Thomas de Heyham on the north and one rood next land of the said Thomas on the south' (Maxwell Lyte 1902, A. 8025). This may or may not be the Thomas de Hegham with whom we are concerned, as he is known to have had a son of the same name. Another deed, this time of the sixth year of the reign of Edward II (1290), finds Thomas junior enfeoffing two-and-a-half acres of arable land in Rotherhithe parish to a London fishmonger, Robert Saleman (Story Maskelyne 1906, 183). Around a decade later, that same Thomas granted to John Donnyng 'a grange and land in Kyngeston, lying in the western field of Norbetone', though I have not been able to find evidence that his father previously owned the property in question (Maxwell Lyte 1890, B. 1608).

Given his family's demonstrable interests in the north-east quarter of the historic county, it is not surprising to find that the bulk of the published textual records of Thomas de Hegham connect him with Kent, where he seems to have been of middling importance in later 13th century. The 1258–59 special eyre of Surrey and Kent includes three records (see Hershey 2004, 166–67 [no. 287]; also 204 and 246 [nos. 344 and 428]) of a complaint brought by Thomas and his three brothers against the former sheriff of Kent concerning lands and tenements in Milstead, Sittingbourne and Halstow that were left to them by their late father (Robert de Hegham), only they were not of age and as a consequence the sheriff levied a fine on their mother, Sarah. As is noted by Andrew Hershey (2004, lii–liii), what is most remarkable about the case is that the events in question had taken place more than a quarter of a century earlier!

Of even more interest is the record of an inquisition held at Middleton in 1271, which heard testimony that Thomas had been 'against the party of our Lord the King, and of Edward his eldest son, at the siege of Rochester Castle' in April 1264 during the rebellion against Henry III led by Simon de Montfort, and had 'received into his house ... the King's enemies' — leading to a retributive seizure from Thomas of a range of livestock and goods, including 40 quarters of barley, four pigs and 15 little pigs, 34 geese, and one empty cart (Kent Archaeological Society 1866, 244–45; also Stewart 2013, 159). Other records from this time paint him in a different light, as a man loyal to the king and tainted by associ-

ation with de Montfort having acted ‘through fear lest he should offend the said Simon’ (Stewart 2013, 160). He appears to have been able to restore his status nonetheless, for the 1274 Kent Hundred Rolls refer to him as ‘the bailiff of the 7 hundreds’ (*ballivus vij hundredorum*; Jones 2007, unpaginated).

What actually happened and when?

A quick glance at the information tabulated below, and likewise reading the source texts for the first time, may well give the impression that the cases presented to the 1263 and 1268 eyres were about one and the same episode. But reread the texts and there can be no doubt that they record two separate but in several ways astonishingly similar attacks on Thomas’ property.

We are fortunate to have not just detailed information about the first incident but also a precise date for when it took place; 1st December 1257. Thomas alleged that on that day Robert le Ryder and others had broken into his house in Rotherhithe ‘by the incitement and command’ of John de Staingrave, and ‘took and carried away ... goods to the value of twenty marks’, comprised of precious metal items worth ten marks and ‘other goods and victuals ... namely wine, ale and bread’ which he also valued at ten marks. Thomas went on to claim that in total he had ‘suffered damage to the value of £60’ — equivalent to 90 marks — as a result of the actions of John, Robert and accomplices! Robert le Ryder and John de Staingrave gave very different testimony, as might be expected given the nature of the alleged crime. They denied any forced entry was made and claiming that Thomas had already vacated the house, which was held in fee of the Earl of Gloucester — for whom John served as the steward and bailiff of his castle at Tonbridge (Stewart 2006, 16).

The eyre jury reached a somewhat different conclusion again; Robert le Ryder had led a group of armed men (from Eltham, presumably another property of the Earl of Gloucester) to Thomas’ house in Rotherhithe and, over the course of two days, destroyed goods (specifically victuals) worth 40 shillings or three marks, and removed from it a horse, two towels and one of his servants, John de Renham. Horse and man were taken all the way to Tonbridge Castle, whereupon the horse was let loose and disappeared but de Renham ‘was detained ... for some time’ (*detentus per aliquod tempus*). The jury also found Thomas had been compensated for his losses already by the Earl of Gloucester, and so was in mercy for making a false claim; Robert was taken into custody for trespass, later paying a 20 shilling fine; and John de Staingrave also paid a fine of five marks (Stewart 2006, 15–16).

The second attack is not so closely dated, being said to have taken place ‘during the time of troubles’ (*tempore turbacionis*), which could be broadly defined as the period between 1263 and 1267; it might be speculated that it happened in 1264, around the time Thomas had animals and household items seized from his Kentish estate (Stewart 2013, 18–19). It is one of many such incidents dealt with by the 1268 eyre *de terre datis*. The account set down in the record of the inquest is also not as lengthy as the one above, but is ripe with interesting details about the goods and chattels that were removed. Seven men (elsewhere characterised as ‘certain criminals’) were said by the jurors of the hundreds of Brixton and Southwark (*de hundredis Brixston et Sutwerch*, a notable development from the time of the Domesday Survey) to have ‘plundered’ (*depredati*) Thomas’ premises at Rotherhithe, presumably the same house as was raided in 1257. A horse, precious metal items, a host of more domestic items, and food and drink are listed as being taken by the seven men.

The hundredal jurors also named two other men plus ‘the reeve of Eltham’ (did all three hail from the same place, perhaps not coincidentally being from whence Robert le Ryder and accomplices had come in 1257?) who had plundered Thomas’ Rotherhithe property ‘of corn, hay, animals and other stock found there’ (*de bladis, fena, animalibus et alio instauo ibi invento*) altogether valued at £60. The men — apparently just the latter three — were ordered to appear at Bermondsey. Whether they did is not recorded; nor is what action (if any) was taken against the other seven men.

Material culture of the two raids

The following table captures all of the material cultural items referred to in the two records of the legal cases, in the order in which they appear:

1263 Surrey eyre	1268 eyre <i>de terre datis</i>
3 gilt silver bowls (<i>ciphos argenti deauratos</i>)	Horse (<i>equo</i>) [worth 15 marks]
3 gold rings (<i>anulos auri</i>)	Strongbox (<i>forsario</i>) with gold and silver jewellery (<i>jacalibus aureis et argentiis</i>) and money (<i>denariis</i>) [together worth 30 marks]
12 silver spoons (<i>coclearia argenti</i>) [together worth 10 marks]	Clothes (<i>robis</i>)
Horse (<i>equum</i>) [worth 16 shillings]	Coverlets (<i>coopertoriis</i>)
2 towels (<i>duo manutergia</i>) [worth 12 pence]	Cloths (<i>mappis</i>)
[All goods including victuals together worth 20 marks]	Linen cloths (<i>lintheamentis</i>)
	Sword-belts (<i>chapetis</i>)
Martial equipment used in break-in	Gowns (<i>rochetis</i>)
Swords (<i>gladiis</i>)	Other clothes (<i>aliis indumentis</i>) [together worth 15 marks]
Bows (<i>arcubus</i>)	Two cloths (<i>teylloriis</i>) worked by his wife and her maid [worth 40 shillings]
Arrows (<i>sagittis</i>)	Household utensils (<i>utensilibus</i>)
Coats of mail (<i>loricis</i>)	Urns (<i>urneis</i>)
Hauberks (<i>haubergellis</i>)	Jugs (<i>ereneis</i>)
	Dishes (<i>patellis</i>) [together worth 20 shillings]

The items listed can be categorised and discussed in turn. Given the prominence afforded to them by early placement in both lists, the natural place to start is with the **precious metal items**. Stewart observed on the basis of the 1263 list that Thomas de Hegham ‘was a man of some wealth’ (2013, 160). The multiplicity of all three item types would seem to bear this out, as would the fact there were broadly similar items present in his house to be stolen a few years later. The later record also prompts the unanswerable question of whether the strongbox in which the gold and silver objects were kept represented a ploy to stop the theft of such items for a second time? If so, it was an unsuccessful one!

Present in both lists are **clothes and other fabric items**. In some cases it is possible to calculate individual costs: each towel stolen in 1257 was valued by the jurors at 6 pence, and each cloth worked on by Thomas’ wife (presumably Isabella, though she is not named) and her maid (*ancille*) in the period 1263–67 at 20 shillings. The presence of the latter may hint at the work being done in the Rotherhithe house. The reference to sword-belts (*chapetis*) in the later list is also noteworthy. The lists of Thomas’ possessions are otherwise devoid of any **weapons and armour**, but the earlier record elaborates on the martial equipment employed by those who broke in and occupied his house (including mailcoats, *loricis*, missed from the published translation; compare Stewart 2006, 14 and 15). It is necessary to highlight,

however, that this information was provided by Thomas, who may have sought to overemphasise the gravity and intent of the occupation of his property — Robert le Ryder testified that ‘he did not come with force and arms to the aforesaid house’ (*non venit vi et armis ad predictam domum*) and the band of men from Eltham is not described as having been armed in what the jurors later said on oath (Stewart 2006, 14–15).

Rather more prominent in the list compiled from the eyre *de terre datis* record are **vessels and utensils** presumably connected with the storage, preparation and consumption of food and drink — though the silver spoons and silver gilt bowls could be categorised thus as well. It is probable most of the later-at-tested vessels were made of pottery, while the unspecified ‘utensils’ could have been of wood, metal, or both. It is also important to remember that the foodstuffs and drinks consumed in or removed from the house likewise would have had to be stored using vessels or other artefacts. Indeed, the passage that documents the utensils and vessels taken in the 1260s also lists ‘flesh of pig and sheep worth 100s, [...] wine, beer, cider and bread worth 50s.’ (*de carne porcin’ et ovin’ prec’ C s; [...] de vino, cervisa, cisera, pane prec’ L s.*). From an archaeological perspective, many of the goods and chattels in this paragraph would be expected to be identifiable to a greater or lesser extent from excavated ceramic and faunal assemblages.

As living creatures, the two **horses** mentioned during the two inquests sit somewhat apart from the above categorisations, although here too there are potential material cultural implications in terms of the horse furniture they might have worn, from bridles to stirrups. The markedly different valuations of the two animals — 16 shillings or just over one mark (1263 eyre) versus 15 marks (1268 eyre *de terre datis*) — perhaps says less about their respective qualities and more about the attitudes of the two juries when it came to ascribing monetary values to Thomas’ lost goods and chattels. The 1263 Surrey eyre jury found that Thomas had lost goods worth 40 shillings or two pounds in 1257, whereas its 1268 counterpart valued his later losses at more than 50 pounds, and that was before the separate “plundering” of his corn, hay and livestock assessed to have been worth 60 pounds in total.



This essay affords the opportunity to shine a light on one of historic Surrey’s lesser-spotted medieval ruins; the so-called King Edward III’s manor house at Rotherhithe. The visible remains date from 1349–56 and represent a moated manorial complex: built for Edward III, probably on an existing demesne centre ([Historic England NHLE entry number 1001983](#)). One wall of the complex survived to a height of five metres in the early 20th century (as documented in Surrey Archaeological Collections volume 20), having been incorporated into a much later warehouse building, regrettably demolished in the 1930s. The site was subject to various pieces of archaeological work between 1985 and 1994, and was “restored” to its present state in thereafter.

Conclusions

Susan Stewart's comment that 'Thomas de Hegham's 'obsessive litigation against those he reckoned had robbed him [in 1264] seem to have borne little fruit and must have cost him a great deal' (Stewart 2013, 100) may have a valid parallel in the earlier case he brought before the Surrey eyre in 1263. Thomas may have had limited success in his legal actions, but it is fortunate the records of the inquests provide us with some remarkable insights concerning some of the items within his Rotherhithe house. They are by no means proxy inventories for its contents, lacking some key object types (furniture, for instance), but nonetheless provide a level of detail few other available historical sources can match.

If the site of the house of Thomas de Hegham could be identified and was available for excavation, and provided that archaeological horizons for the period in question survived, probably the most anyone could hope to find would be fragments and echoes of the types of historically-attested stolen or destroyed possessions. The lists derived from the legal records are not typical of what might be found on a higher-status domestic site through archaeology, but probably are not atypical of the sorts of goods and chattels that were used or present in the houses of the more affluent in later 13th-century Surrey. Excavations at the sub-manorial centre at Alstead in Merstham parish recovered silver coins, a ring, arrowheads and horse furniture, as well as many pottery sherds and bones of animals including pigs and sheep — all paralleled by what was recorded at Thomas de Hegham's Rotherhithe house in the 1260s, but a most meagre showing by comparison (see specialist reports in Ketteringham 1976, 33–65).

Aggregated at the county level, the material recovered in the course of excavations of later medieval manorial/elite sites in the county and artefacts reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme by metal detectorists and other finders provide more substantial corpora for comparison with the textual records. It is only by studying the archaeological and historical evidence alongside one another can we hope to build up a truly detailed picture of the material culture of Surrey in this period.

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New publications

Living Standards and Material Culture in English Rural Households 1300–1600: Digital Archive

As mentioned above, Dr Ben Jervis spoke to the Medforum in December 2020 on the subject of the research project, Living Standards and Material Culture in English Rural Households 1300–1600, for which he was co-investigator. In May 2021, its Digital Archive was released on the Archaeological Data Service website. At the heart of the archive are ‘Query’ functions enabling searches of the archaeological and historical databases assembled over the course of the project. The connection to medieval Surrey is somewhat tangential; one of the shires studied by the project was Middlesex, and as a consequence several excavated sites in the hundred (now Surrey borough) of Spelthorne feature in the archaeological database. While data specific to the county may be somewhat limited, it is hard not to be bowled over by the myriad types of objects that are listed in the databases, and enthused by the ability to make connections between them. Altogether a fascinating resource.

Alice Forward, Ben Jervis, Chris Briggs, Mathew Tompkins and Tomasz Gromelski, *Living Standards and Material Culture in English Rural Households 1300–1600: Digital Archive* (2021) https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/households_lt_2020/index.cfm (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1085022>).

Sites of Power and Assembly in the Thames Valley in the Middle Ages

It’s not often that a location in medieval Surrey feature in an article published in a national (nay, international) journal. It’s an even rarer occurrence when two such sites are featured in this way. And for said article to be available for free online and not behind a paywall — well, let’s not the labour the point any further, you get the idea! Prof Alex Sanmark’s contribution to the latest volume of *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, ‘Sites of Power and Assembly in the Thames Valley in the Middle Ages’, discusses two important assembly places in the historic county: Kingston-upon-Thames and Runnymede (as well as Westminster in historic Middlesex). The article mixes historical and archaeological evidence with topographical observations, identifying commonalities between all three sites. The article is more of a discussion piece than an exhaustive assessment of the three assembly places; notably it doesn’t engage as fully as it could with the archaeology associated with early medieval Kingston (as detailed in the Appendix to *Newsletter* 14 in 2018). Nevertheless, Sanmark makes a number of interesting suggestions and her treatment of Runnymede is particularly welcome, its pre-Magna Carta significance being identified as a desirable subject of research in the 2006 Surrey Archaeological Research Framework as well as dovetailing with some of the aspirations of the current Runnymede Explored project (<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/runnymede/projects/heritage-lottery-fund-support-for-historic-magna-carta-site>).

Alex Sanmark, ‘Sites of Power and Assembly in the Thames Valley in the Middle Ages’, *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 22 (2020), 114-31 — PDF downloadable from Archaeopress website at <https://www.archaeopress.com/ArchaeopressShop/Public/displayProductDetail.asp?id={2451E2D8-9103-4D66-A574-C8E0FA774AFE}>.

We hope to have Prof Sanmark speak to the Medforum about the subject of her article at a future meeting.

Andrew Margetts, *The Wandering Herd: The medieval cattle economy of South-East England c.450–1450* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2021)

Every so often in medieval studies something is published plugging a yawning gap that needed filling, only few others were aware that such a need existed. So it is with cattle farming in South-East England in the Middle Ages. Rarely if ever has it been doubted that cattle were important beasts in the region during the period in question but, prior to this book, no dedicated study had sought to confirm and explore their presumed importance, unlike sheep and pigs (albeit the publications dedicated to these domesticates have numbered only a handful apiece, and are mostly articles).

The Wandering Herd is based on the author's University of Exeter PhD thesis as well as research arising from his work in the commercial archaeological sector, and covers an impressive breadth of evidence across its 11 chapters. Multiple scales are adopted, largely for expediency. For once in a published regional study based on this corner of Britain, Kent does not dominate the analysis; instead it is Sussex that is most prominent. A minority of chapters are exclusively Sussex-focused: one (later medieval documentary testimony for cattle) out of choice, a couple more ('valley entrenchments' of the South Downs; the two Wealden case study sites excavated and previously brought to publication by the author) out of necessity.

Nevertheless, the book still delivers plenty that is either directly relevant or else applicable to Surrey, much of it new and exciting. Examples of its novel contributions include the identification of a sizeable arc-shaped enclosure at Cowshot (the name of which in Margetts' estimation means 'angle of land used for cow-pasturage') near Brookwood, a landscape feature that probably originated as a dedicated cattle-farming site; and discussion of a faunal assemblage from Buckland parish and what it may signify about the resident medieval peasant community.

Possibly the book's most important contribution from a Surrey perspective concerns Vachery near Cranleigh, but also has implications for Wealden Surrey more generally. The name Vachery has long been identified as a Norman French one signifying a farm associated specifically with cows ('vaccary, dairy farm'). Later medieval historical records show it was the site of the capital messuage of the Manor of Shere Vachery. Margetts reconstructs the extent of its associated park, known to have been in existence by the mid-13th century, but then goes further to posit that it was based on an earlier oval enclosure containing a "cattle ranch". The claim is immediately buttressed by a very persuasive analogy drawn with the only other comparable place-name in the region; Chelwood Vetchery in Ashdown Forest, where an oval enclosure can also be traced. Many other examples of oval enclosures with likely origins linked to cattle farming are identified, mostly within a trans-regional transect incorporating central Surrey (which encompasses five such enclosures identified with varying degrees of confidence). This feeds the speculation that many medieval parks in the Weald and elsewhere may have hitherto unsuspected roots in earlier enclosed pastures, and hence to locations linked to transhumant grazing practices which are so synonymous with the earlier medieval Weald. Such a hypothesis merits testing through multi-disciplinary research on the not-inconsiderable number of former medieval parks in the Surrey portion of the Weald.

The Wandering Herd is an excellent book. Not only does it provide a thorough assessment of the region's cattle economy through the Middle Ages, but also it shows clearly how this interlinked with broader issues of settlement patterns and road networks. In doing so, it makes a significant contribution towards a better understanding of how the historic landscape of South-East England came to take the form it did, helping towards redressing the present imbalance which has seen so much scholarly attention paid to the so-called Central Province as well as East Anglia. Cattle farming may lie at the heart of the book, but it has something to say about many more things besides.



The postulated link between enclosed pastures and later parks chimes with work done in 2019–20 by the Surrey Historic Environment Record on Lagham Park around South Godstone. In its traceable extent, Lagham Park may well be early post-medieval, but there is no doubting that a park associated with the Lagham Manor moated manorial site did exist prior to that, as it is attested on several occasions in the 14th and early 15th centuries. A 1248 reference to 200 acres of woodland, and others to rights of pasturage and pannage in the park, may well add up to Lagham Park having been formed from a defined and perhaps already enclosed area of wood pasture related to Lagham Wood, of which the above photograph shows the site of the last remnant which was felled in the mid-20th century. The HER's Lagham Park historic landscape survey report is available to download via the [Exploring Surrey's Past](#) website.

Forthcoming events

SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, 27 November, 2021 — 10am to 4pm

SHERF 2021 — Archaeology of the Church: Perspectives from Recent Work in the South-East

This year's annual Surrey Historic Environment Research Framework (SHERF) event will be held jointly with the Council for British Archaeology South-East annual conference and themed around the subject of church archaeology. **The event will be a one-day virtual conference held online, via Zoom video conferencing.**

Speakers include Gabor Thomas (University of Reading) on Lyminge, Alistair Douglas (Pre-Construct Archaeology) on Bermondsey Abbey, Natalie Cohen (National Trust) on Canterbury Cathedral archaeology, Andrew Richardson (Canterbury Archaeological Trust) on St Eanswythe, Jo Seaman (Eastbourne Borough Council) on recent work at St Mary's Eastbourne, and Rob Briggs (Surrey County Council) on the tomb monument of Sir Thomas Cawarden from St Mary the Virgin's church, Bletchingley.

The final programme and booking info will be available shortly.