

**ASPECTS OF ARCHAEOLOGY
AND HISTORY IN SURREY**

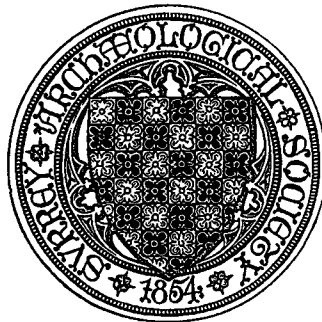
ASPECTS OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY IN SURREY

**towards a research framework
for the county**

EDITED BY

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SURREY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
CASTLE ARCH, GUILDFORD

2004

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ISBN 0 9541460 3 4

This volume is published with the aid of a grant from English Heritage.

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Front cover: View south across the Weald from Newlands Corner

Back cover: Looking north towards the escarpment of the North Downs near Silent Pool, Albury

Photographs by Giles Pattison

Typesetting and printing by: Unwin Brothers Ltd, Old Woking, Surrey

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Preface

Exactly 21 years ago the Society held a conference on the Archaeology of Surrey which was followed four years later by the publication of *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*. The aim then was to fill a major gap, as there had been no survey of Surrey's archaeology since D C Whimster's book, also entitled *The Archaeology of Surrey*, in 1931.

Both are now out of print and, with the volume of new work in all aspects of archaeology amassed over the last two decades, the Society decided to hold a conference in 2001 to review current knowledge of the historic county of Surrey and, importantly, to widen the focus. The Society's stated aims include all matters 'relating to the pre-history and history of the County' and the conference embraced this principle. Whimster regarded the 11th century Guildown Massacres at Guildford as 'a fitting end' to the account of Surrey's archaeology. But archaeology did not stop then – or even at 1540 – and neither do the interests of the Society.

The conference sought to demonstrate that archaeology is not confined to what is left lying buried beneath the soil, but embraces the social and economic context of those remains: the standing buildings, the archaeology of our recent industrial past and not least the defences of the Second World War. All are tools in the understanding of our past and there is a need to recognize the connections between the different disciplines involved.

Since *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540* was published in 1987, archaeological knowledge has proceeded at a tremendous rate, fuelled by the immense amount of work undertaken by professional units as part of planning procedures introduced in 1990. There has however been little time to synthesize the volume of data becoming available. This publication, as well as being an account of the conference held in 2001, provides an opportunity to pull together the current state of our knowledge in all disciplines and to point the direction of future research.

One of the aspects of this publication that is particularly pleasing is the contribution of amateurs to our current understanding. The Society has always encouraged harmonious relationships between professional and amateur archaeologists, and it is fortunate that a number of professionals give freely of their time to support the Society's activities. Large-scale, developer-funded excavation will remain the province of the professional units – though it is to be hoped with more opportunity for volunteer contribution. Important as they are, these excavations are seldom research led. Essentially, rescue archaeology is dictated by opportunity and funding from sources not necessarily sympathetic to the outcome.

The Society, on the other hand, is well placed to set its own agenda and can sometimes react speedily to threats that have escaped the normal planning controls. A notable example was the Romano-British temple site at Wanborough, which was being immeasurably damaged by irresponsible treasure hunters plundering the site at night. Intervention by the Society in undertaking two rescue excavations led to the site being scheduled; in addition, the experience at Wanborough led to the Society being instrumental in campaigning for a change in treasure trove law. This culminated, after several years of hard work, in the passing of the Treasure Act 1996.

The future for amateur archaeology, in the Society's view, is encouraging. The obligation to pursue research to the best possible standard applies to the professional and amateur alike. Today growing numbers of mature students studying archaeology and history are gaining the knowledge and expertise to undertake further work and exploration, both above and below ground. Without financial constraints, time and enthusiasm as well as local knowledge are on their side.

The more holistic and inclusive approach to archaeology provides a framework within which there is opportunity for all those interested to play a part. The authors of this volume have sought to identify areas for future research and the Society, through its various committees and groups, will encourage and support projects which seek to expand our understanding of the history and prehistory of the historic county. Amateurs continue to have a vital role to play and, as these essays demonstrate, research projects in all disciplines undertaken by non-professionals can inform and contribute to the wider debate.

Audrey Monk
President, Surrey Archaeological Society

November 2003

Foreword

According to the forthright William Cobbett, ‘The county of Surrey presents to the eye of the traveller a greater contrast than any other county in England. It has some of the very best and some of the worst lands, not only in England, but in the world.’ And Cobbett did not have my view of the ancient county. From an eleventh floor eyrie on Millbank, site of the great prison, and next door to the Tate, I can gaze across what John Evelyn, diarist and gardener, called ‘the county of my Birth and my Delight’. The trees, which attracted Evelyn to Surrey, are notable only for their absence. The old county boundary of the Thames is now marked by a cliff of undistinguished offices between Lambeth and Vauxhall Bridges. Only the hanging gardens of the MI6 building punctuate the blandness. In the new generation of glass-fronted apartments the inhabitants, viewing and viewed, probably do not even realize that they are perched over what was once Surrey – the southern district. Perhaps the nearby Oval cricket ground, now grassed within the Great Wen, may remind them. Cobbett was right though about the county of contrasts. Surrey may be small, an eighth the size of my own home county of Yorkshire but, thanks to geology, it is varied.

Surrey is not the most identifiable of counties; lacking any coastline and with few natural boundaries, its shape is not distinctive. And its history is positively confusing. In the *Victoria County History*, the editor H E Malden complained that the county was ‘daily encroached upon by the growing cancer of brickwork’. He might equally have bemoaned the tendency of modern government and authorities to mess around with it. In 1965 the Greater London Council snatched the boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond and Sutton. In return they gave Surrey Staines and Sunbury. One might think that in a small county, not well endowed with great towns, such poaching would undermine its sense of identity. For the past thousand years Surrey has also had the dubious privilege of living next door to a large, noisy expansionist neighbour. A neighbour which saw Surrey as a suitable site for its overspill, its railway stations, industry and its cemeteries. Yet in spite of this Surrey has fought for and retained its sense of identity. And no one has contributed more – with the possible exception of its cricketers – than the county’s historians and archaeologists.

The Surrey Archaeological Society was founded in 1854, the high point of the great Victorian burgeoning of county societies. Unlike Wiltshire, Dorset or Yorkshire, Surrey was not noted for visible prehistoric monuments or spectacular country houses. Yet it is an amazing mosaic of contrasts: remote, yet on London’s doorstep; buried in part beneath a tide of brick and concrete and possessing some of southern England’s most evocative landscapes. Traditionally home to peasants, industrial workers, immigrants, royalty – and more recently popstars and stockbrokers. You can’t get much more varied. This is what makes Surrey so interesting for the archaeologist and historian. It is an ideal place to study change: climatic, economic, political or social.

Historians like W G Hoskins have often bemoaned change; regretted the loss of an idealized golden age. Some archaeologists also talk about their subject in the same way – when beautifully thought-out research excavations could be undertaken at leisure, unpressured by development, the need to stick to budgets or the anxieties of competitive tendering.

Times change for good and bad. When I gave the introductory lecture at the conference in Guildford which initiated this excellent volume the audience was particularly concerned about the implications of the Valletta Convention.

Thanks to the bequest of Donald Margary, the Surrey Archaeological Society has not only had the people and enthusiasm to drive forward archaeological research but also some financial resource. The Society has for over a century and a half been in the forefront of local research. Not surprisingly members of the Society were concerned about publicity which claimed that the Government had signed up to an international treaty which would ban or severely restrict the activities of amateur archaeologists. As the Chief Archaeologist at English Heritage, I was able to assure the audience that there was no intention on the part of the UK Government to put in place a licensing system for archaeological excavations. English Heritage wishes to promote high standards in archaeological fieldwork, whether carried out by professionals or amateurs, but we do not regard another layer of controls, in the form of excavation licences, as the way forward.

The Valletta Convention is one of a series of conventions for the protection of archaeology produced by the Council of Europe over the last 50 years. It is, in fact, an update of the 1969 London Convention. In many cases, the wording has been taken directly from this earlier convention, while in others Valletta has been updated to some extent but without changing the essential meaning of the earlier treaty. The UK ratified the London Convention in 1973 so that it was in force here for nearly 30 years before being replaced by the Valletta Convention.

By ratifying the Valletta Convention the UK Government has undertaken to maintain a legal system for the protection of the archaeological heritage. In my opinion, for anyone who values our historic environment this should be good news.

States joining the Convention agree to promote an integrated policy for the conservation of the archaeological heritage, to arrange for financial support for research, to facilitate the pooling of information, promote public awareness and to improve co-operation between parties signing the Convention. It is for each country to apply the Convention within its own legal system. Despite the concerns expressed at the Guildford Conference, the Convention does not require radical changes to the way in which archaeological sites are protected in this country.

Most concerns relate to Article 3 of the Convention. In fact, this is one of the areas in which the new treaty is based on and expands what was said in the 1969 London Convention. The principal provisions on the control of excavation have actually changed very little from those in the London Convention which, in the past 30 years, have had no adverse affect on the activities of amateur archaeologists. The Government has now said (in a written reply to a Parliamentary question) that 'the Government does not believe that additional legislation, requiring a licensing system, is necessary to fulfil Article 3. Much archaeological work is already controlled through existing mechanisms. There may be scope for developing a voluntary Code of Conduct for those who wish to undertake archaeological work outside the existing systems of control.' By 'existing systems' the statement refers to Scheduled Monument Consent and local planning authority conditions imposed under Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (Archaeology and Planning).

I believe that all responsible archaeologists will support such a move to improve the quality of archaeological work in this country. English Heritage is currently discussing how to develop this policy with the Council for British Archaeology, the Institute of Field Archaeologists, the voluntary sector, and our colleagues in Scotland and Wales at Historic Scotland and Cadw. We intend to promote the role of the responsible amateur in archaeology by providing advice and training, through local societies and also by developing best practice with divers and metal detectorists.

Since 1990 developers have been responsible for mitigating the impact (in the jargon of PPG16) of their developments. This has undoubtedly led to the increasing professionalization of archaeology, the breakdown of old 'territories' and the influx of new organizations – and to some extent the marginalization of organizations such as the county societies.

The response to this lies in part with archaeological societies themselves – and this volume is one such response. We have had a vast increase in data in the past decade. People are desperate – academia, fieldworkers and local communities – to know more about what has been found and what it means. The Society's popular publication *Hidden Depths: An Archaeological Exploration of Surrey's Past*, 2002, told the story to a wide audience. This publication will provide information and ideas for more specialist groups, but it will, I hope, also stimulate future research and future fieldwork, exhibitions and activities in schools.

Archaeology works best when it is embedded in the lives of local communities and tells the story of all our pasts. The Surrey Archaeological Society has been doing this since 1854 and I am sure it will continue to find innovative ways of doing so in the future. If not then we deserve to join the long-suffering on the purgatorial ladder of Chaldon Church.

David Miles
Chief Archaeologist, English Heritage

28 October 2003

Introduction

Seventeen years ago the publication of *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540* was a landmark in the study of the county. Not since the appearance of D C Whimster's book *The Archaeology of Surrey* over 50 years earlier had a full-length volume devoted to the county's early past been published. In contemplating the arrival of a new millennium it seemed appropriate once again to take stock, initially via a weekend conference held at the University of Surrey on 2 and 3 June 2001.

The essays contained in this volume stem either directly or indirectly from this meeting. The title of the conference, *Archaeology in Surrey 2001: Towards a Research Agenda for the 21st Century*, signalled something of its intent. The word 'towards' was, and remains, the key, for neither the conference nor this volume attempts to set out a research agenda for the county. Each is but a step along the way to a research strategy and, beyond it, to a research framework. However, it is singularly appropriate that this contribution should appear on the occasion of the Society's 150th anniversary.

In the run-up to the original conference the organizers were determined that the meeting should provide a broader and more cross-curricular approach to Surrey's past than had been attempted previously, and this approach has been carried through into the present volume. In part perhaps this reflects the current fashion for general 'inclusiveness'; but in part too a long overdue recognition of the need to accommodate the more recent and often still upstanding past. Accordingly contributions have been drawn from a deliberately wide range of disciplines and backgrounds that include earth scientists, architects and social and industrial historians as well as archaeologists.

At first, the intention was not to attempt a complete chronological overview of the county's past or even necessarily to seek to update *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*, but simply to encourage fruitful cross-disciplinary discussion and debate. The conference programme in particular set out to confront barriers rather than erect them and was arranged in such a way as to prompt connections as well as highlight contrasts. Subsequently, in preparing the conference proceedings for publication, it seemed sensible to adopt a more relaxed approach and to round out the coverage by commissioning a number of additional papers. These fell into two categories: chronological contributions, intended to update parts of *Surrey to 1540* and extend its time-span (eg the papers by Cotton, Bird and Crocker); and papers intended to plug some obvious gaps or amplify particular topics (eg those by Branch & Green and Bannister). To this

end two maps are provided on the following pages: a simplified geology map, which is also used as a background for data in several of the papers, and a map showing boundaries and locations.

Accommodations had perforce to be made along the way: the untimely passing of Peter Reynolds shortly after the conference robbed not just this volume but the whole of British archaeology of the contribution of a widely respected and witty practitioner. Furthermore, pressure of other work forced the reluctant withdrawal of Phil Jones ('6000 Years of Pottery') and Martin Welch ('Settlement Patterns in Early to Mid Saxon Surrey') from the intended line-up, although John Hines was able to step in for the latter at a late stage in proceedings.

Celebrating the turning of a millennium and indeed of a sesquicentenary offers an obvious opportunity to look back – this after all is the stock-in-trade of archaeologists and historians. Yet it also affords a chance to look forward, in this case to the eventual formulation of an overarching archaeological research framework for the county, and for the wider South East region of which it forms a part. To this end, each of the contributors to this volume was specifically invited to conclude their paper with some ideas which might contribute to this process. This they have all dutifully done and we thank them for it.

Other thanks are due too. First to the large team of people who made the original conference work. These include members of the organizing committee, the staff of the University of Surrey, the Session Chairs, Speakers, Stewards, Exhibitors and the one hundred and sixty or so Delegates, whose close attention never wavered as the lively question sessions demonstrated. Special thanks must, however, be extended to Audrey Monk (then Honorary Secretary of SyAS, now its President) and to John Boulton (Lectures and Symposia Committee), whose tireless efforts behind the scenes before, during and after the conference did much to guarantee its success.

As far as this volume is concerned our main thanks are due to the various contributors for delivering to the agreed timetable, to Giles Pattison and David Williams for preparing many of the illustrations, to Giles Pattison also for designing the cover, to Gerry Moss for preparing the index and to English Heritage for providing financial support.

Jonathan Cotton
Glenys Crocker
Audrey Graham

March 2004

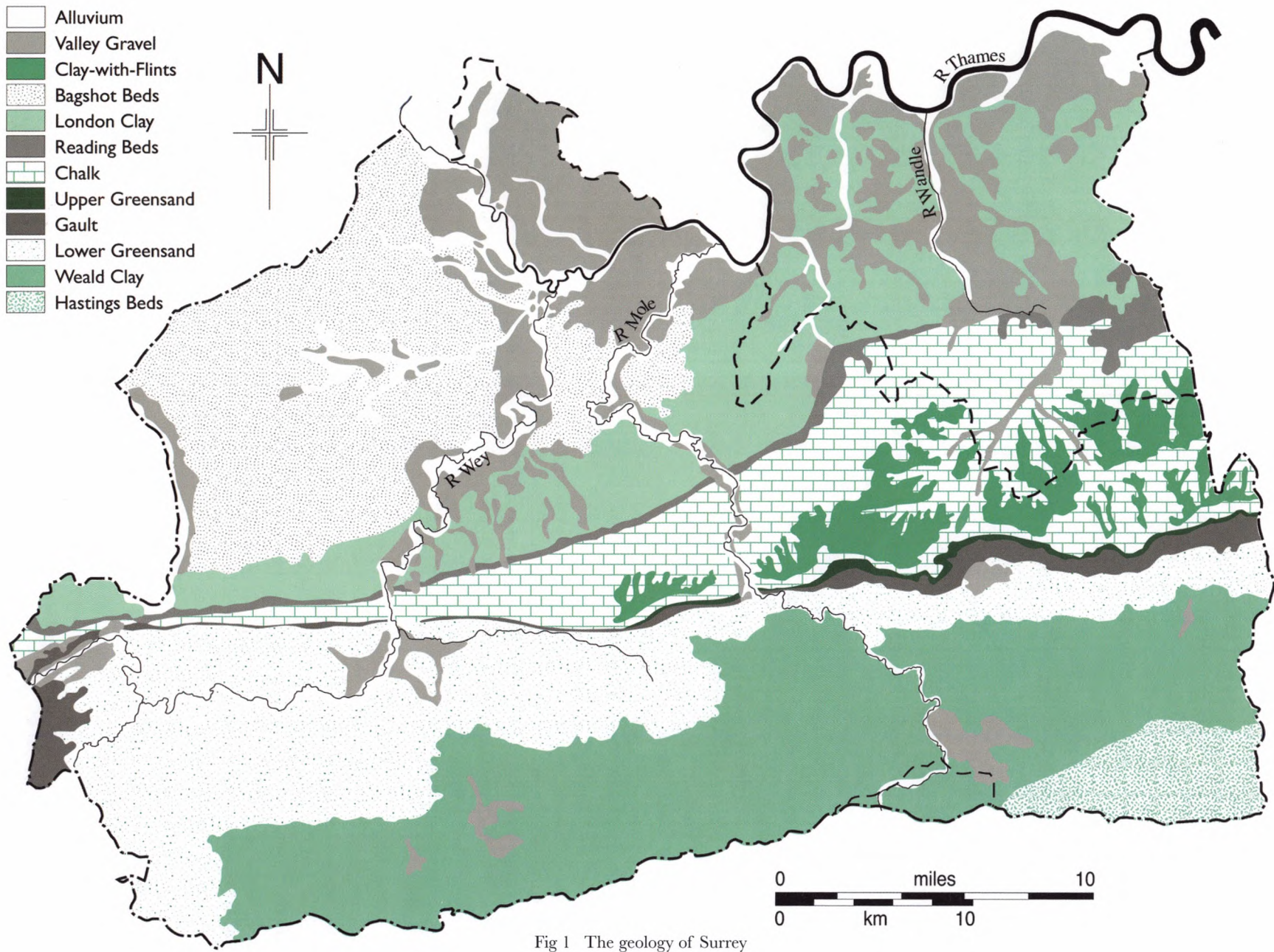


Fig 1 The geology of Surrey

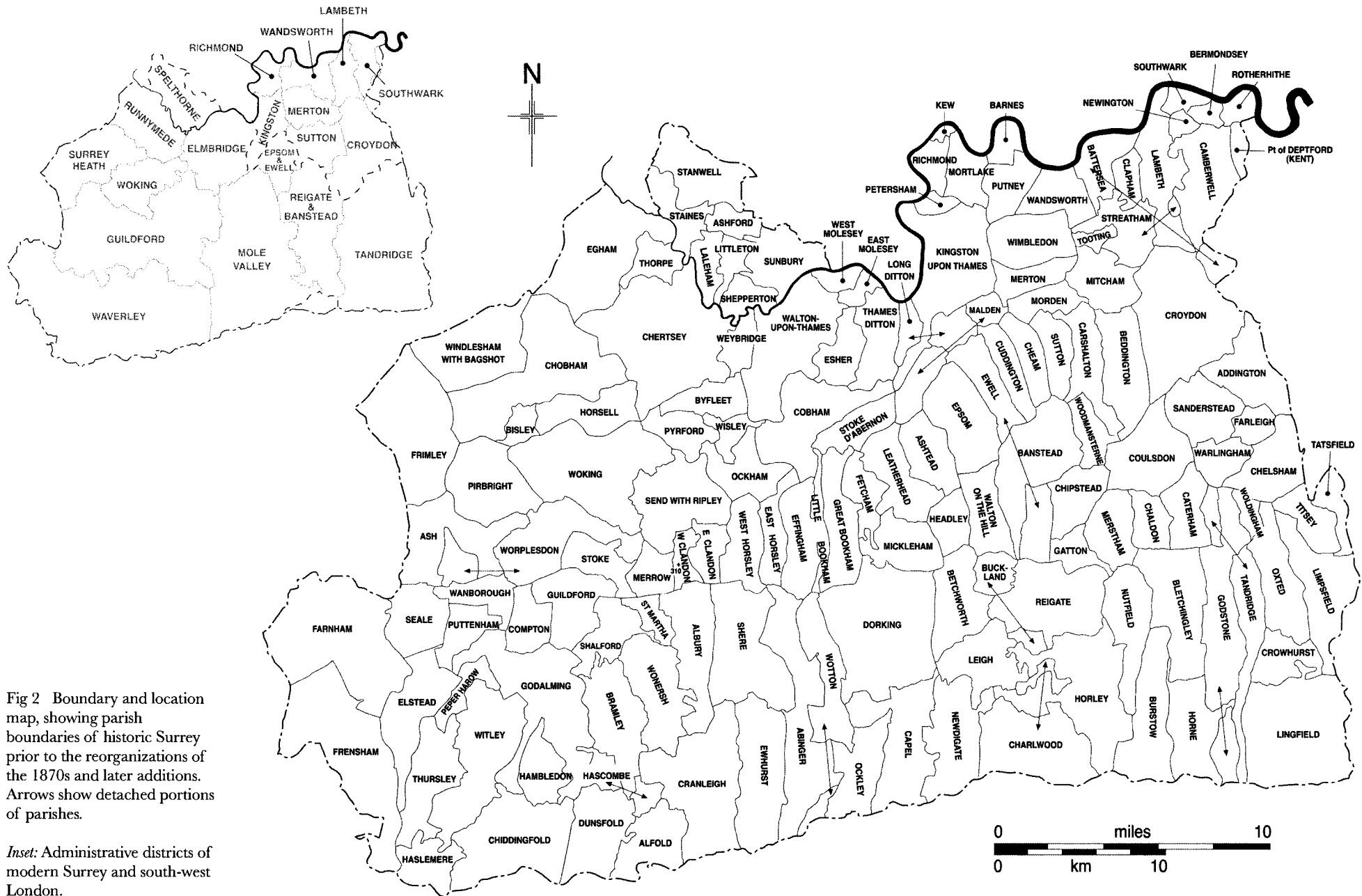


Fig 2 Boundary and location map, showing parish boundaries of historic Surrey prior to the reorganizations of the 1870s and later additions. Arrows show detached portions of parishes.

Inset: Administrative districts of modern Surrey and south-west London.