What did London do for us? London and towns in its region, 1450–1700

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This paper outlines a model or set of questions for one aspect of the archaeology and history of towns in Surrey in the period 1450–1700: the increasing influence of London, and how archaeologists may chart this. The paper starts by avoiding the traditional division between the medieval and post-medieval periods, and argues that many of the effects of London's needs and its resulting influences were already at work in the 14th and 15th centuries. After 1450, these influences increased. They can be divided into the needs of London for food, fuel and other necessaries, which would increasingly determine the character of the surrounding countryside and the small towns; the way that architecture, pottery and other cultural items and ideas spread from the capital into the region via the towns; and the degree to which the towns themselves, by specializing in providing a narrow set of services or products to London, actually prospered in the 15th to 17th centuries. There were also serious changes to towns everywhere at this time, such as the Dissolution and Reformation, and some aspects of urban culture are shared by all towns. Surrey products such as Border Ware pottery were marketed, presumably through London, throughout the region and beyond to the New World. Despite some appearance of local resistance, however, the period as a whole sees the gradual domination of London in the towns around in many aspects of life, and archaeology can illuminate this process and tension.

Introduction

In this paper, I would like to outline a single theme or question: how London's influence and needs changed the region around it, and especially the towns, during the period 1450 to 1700. Some illustrations will be taken from Surrey, but others come from other parts of the region and beyond. The study of medieval and post-medieval urban archaeology in Surrey can only profit when the county is seen as one part of London's immediate hinterland, and the common patterns to be observed may be illustrated just as well or better in other counties around the capital.

My first suggestion is that to discuss the archaeology of these centuries, we must remove, or at least temporarily forget, the traditional division between the medieval and post-medieval periods; a division put variously between 1485 and 1540. This imprecision says something about the usefulness of the boundary. There were political changes to be sure, from invasion in 1485 to the greatest transfer of land within the country since the Norman Conquest, at the Dissolution in the 1530s. But archaeology measures best the changes which happen more slowly, over the longer term. To understand the towns and countryside around London in 1600 or even 1700, we have to delve back into the medieval period, sometimes back to 1200. I will use the terms medieval and post-medieval for convenience, but ignore the division between them.

The London region in the medieval period

Archaeologically, the London region is difficult to define. Indeed, it is best to think of London as in many different regions, depending on the question. By the close of the 13th century London appears regularly to have drawn on an area of over 4000 square miles to obtain its annual grain requirement. Normally it satisfied its requirements from within a 60 to 90 mile radius. A certain emphasis on the growing of oats in the region may have been related to London's need for fodder for all its horses. Low-value grain crops such as oats and rye were grown close to the city, with wheat further out – its higher price made transport worthwhile (Campbell *et al* 1993). The perishable products of market gardening and dairying assumed importance on manors within a few miles of the city, as did firewood and charcoal sales on manors close to London or those with easy access by water. A recent suggestion is that it is now possible, from the amount of archaeological work undertaken in the London area, to chart and model London's changing ecological footprint: the impact of its demands upon the surrounding landscape, both in terms of agrarian production and 'the ways in which ecosystems changed and developed in response to urbanisation' (Roseff & Perring 2002, 124).

From the 13th century, the market towns and villages of the region and of the upper Thames valley were part of a system which supplied London with corn, fuel and other basics (Keene 1989; Galloway & Murphy 1991; Galloway *et al* 1996). London's river trade influenced the growth of towns along the Thames such as Henley (the trans-shipment point for grain for London, mentioned in 1179) and Maidenhead (1202). Through Ware on the river Lea, London drew supplies from the East Midlands. Maidstone

and Faversham also flourished around 1300, from the grain trade. Archaeologists should also be studying the supply of London with building materials – stone and brick – and glass. In this, in addition to looking at the sources such as quarries (Tatton-Brown 2001), we should also be looking at the way in which small towns such as Reigate and Maidstone organized the supply of building materials, both to their localities and to the capital. The stone industries of these two towns were particularly long-lived: large quantities of stone from Reigate and probably from Maidstone ('Kentish') were used by Wren in building St Paul's between 1675 and 1710.

Kingston supplied London with livestock, fish, wood (for both firewood and construction) and pottery by the 13th century. There were numerous Kingston merchants in the capital. In 1270, for instance, Peter de Kyngeston, vintner, held a stone house near Billingsgate which was excavated on the New Fresh Wharf site in Lower Thames Street in 1974. In the case of pots, it may be that an industry which seems originally to have been set up in the capital to make a product imitating an import from overseas subsequently migrated to a cheaper site of production outside the capital (Keene 1995, 233; Walker 2000, 117–18). Another town which probably profited from its London connections was Thaxted in northern Essex, famous for its knives (Andrews 1989). As towns grew in London's orbit, so they often specialized in a craft or form of commerce.

Being on a major road also helped the small towns generally, as in the case of Enfield and Tottenham to the north of London, with their large late medieval churches. The widespread problems for towns throughout England in the second half of the 15th century do not seem to be shared by many small towns in the immediate environs of London, which profited in supplying the capital. This was especially true for those on river routes, such as Enfield, Henley and Faversham.

Nationally the roadside inn for travellers was essentially a new form of building in the 17th century, though there were medieval precedents (Barley 1985, 590, 682–5). One sign of the capital's influence would be groups of inns at stopping places along the main routes to London, often in places which were a typical day's journey apart. A broadsheet of about 1600 bore a chart of such mileages from London in all directions: the main routes across Surrey were from London to Southampton via Wandsworth, Kingston, Coveham (Cobham), Ripley, Guildford and Farnham; and to Exeter, via Staines, Bagshot, Hartleyrow (? Hartley Wintney) and Basingstoke (Orlin 2000, frontispiece). Guildford was already known as full of inns by the time of William Camden in 1607. Groups of inns at such places (as at Croydon, which had many coaching inns on the main London road) merit more study. One would suppose that inns were firstly metropolitan in their form, since the small town or village in which they were being erected probably had nothing like them before, and secondly metropolitan in their details and decoration, particularly mouldings of windows, doors and gateways (this can still be seen in Guildford High Street). Galleries and suites of rooms for travellers were probably medieval developments. Many London inns are known in their 18th century forms (fig 14.1), though they are largely unstudied. There were many inns in Southwark and, as argued in the 14th century (Johnson 1969, 40), Surrey extended right up to the south end of London Bridge.

The example of Croydon is instructive. By the 15th century there was an Old Croydon around the archbishop's palace, and development to the east around the main road to London; this shifting of the centre of gravity was confirmed finally by the formation of the London to Brighton road through Croydon in the 18th century. In this case a small town moved its centre to be on a communication route with the capital (Drewett 1974, 2–4).

One influence from the capital outwards may have been via ownership of land and buildings by Londoners, and in consequence higher land values. From the 13th century Londoners can be found as owners of land both in the countryside and in the towns. By 1300 London merchants held manors at such places as Crayford, Erith, Gravesend and Walthamstow (Williams 1970, 56, 59, 231–7). Retirement into the countryside continued to be popular in the 15th century; rich Londoners bought lands in all the surrounding counties, including Surrey (Thrupp 1948). In Hertfordshire, land values already reflected distance from the capital as early as 1270; throughout the remainder of the Middle Ages, a line drawn between Sawbridgeworth in the east and Langley in the south-west would divide the county into two almost separate regions. This can apparently be followed in the vernacular architecture, settlement patterns and manorial customs (Munby 1977, 35–41). The southern of these two areas presumably reflected London fashions and innovations more.

But what were the material consequences which might be observed by archaeologists? There seems to be no distinctive timber-framing style for buildings in the (inner) London region (Bond 1998), though close-studding from about 1440 is probably a London fashion, and arch-bracing (in which diagonal braces stretch from a vertical up to a horizontal member) is found on 15th century buildings in south-west Essex and thought to be the result of London influence (Stenning *et al* 1996). What little is known of the styles of timber framing present in the medieval and Tudor City of London does not throw much light on this question (Schofield 1995).

Artefacts or features recorded by archaeologists within medieval buildings, whether houses or churches, could have originated in London itself or be a product of somewhere in the region but distributed through the capital. For many luxuries both in life and in death, prominent people throughout the south-east of England looked to London, as exemplified by church monuments and brasses (Blair 1991; Badham & Norris 1999). In contrast some household items made in the London area, quite possibly originally for the London market, found their way into other parts of the region, and this may have been through London itself. The distribution of Penn floor tiles, made in Buckinghamshire but found throughout Essex and Kent, suggests that some regional entrepreneurs were based in London in the 1380s (Schofield 1995, 112; Keen 2002, 229). On Essex sites such as Maldon Friary, small amounts of Kingston-type ware are found (Walker 1999, 94), and Cheam and Coarse Border Wares in Colchester (Walker 2000, 118).

One consequence of highlighting the access which smaller towns had to London, by road or river, is to expect that foreign imports would come to them more easily from the metropolis along those routes and would be found in modern excavations on medieval urban sites. It is therefore to be noted that, at present, there is a 'near-total absence of imported pottery' from urban excavations at least in west and central Surrey (Jones 1998b, 236). This does not accord with our model, unless we wish to propose that in this earlier, medieval (pre-1500) part of the period, most of Surrey was comparatively immune to the capital's influence or was a backwater, or both.

Several of the features of London's post-medieval dominance of the towns of the region were therefore present in the medieval period. From the London point of view, the towns, like the agricultural areas, functioned to furnish the capital with all kinds of provisions. This led to specialization in many towns, and the greater definition and use of road and river routes, with accompanying infrastructures, particularly inns. The capital sent down these routes all kinds of new ideas, particularly fashions in architecture and artefacts. There was also a move towards standardization of certain artefacts, in that the London guilds tried to extend their powers of search to the rest of the country, ostensibly to maintain standards. The outer districts, but perhaps the towns more than the countryside, absorbed goods which came via the capital: both from other parts of England and Britain, and from overseas.

Towns in the period 1450–1600

After 1450, London sucked in people and resources on a scale not seen before. Though the actual figures are sometimes disputed, we can suggest that from *c* 1520 to *c* 1700, the population of the central conurbation increased more than tenfold. The spectacular periods of growth were the second half of the 16th

Fig 14.1 The yard of the Bell Inn, Aldersgate, drawn by T H Shepherd in 1857. Though this is a central London example, it shows the variety of building components to be sought when looking for inns at smaller towns: galleries, a variety of window forms, and a mixture of brick and timber walls. Guildhall Library (79)

century and again in the first half of the 17th century; by 1600 the population of the conurbation may have reached 200,000, and by the early 1670s it was between 475,000 and 550,000 (Harding 1990). The consequences of the periods of rapid growth on the capital itself, for instance a doubling in population and therefore presumably of the built-up area, both within the first half of the 17th century, have not yet been studied in detail by archaeologists. Between 1600 and 1700, London's share of the national population of England rose from 5% to almost 12%. Because London's growth after 1600 was faster than that of the nation at large, it exerted a progressive damping effect on the natural surplus created outside London. In 1550–74 London accounted for 5% of the nation's burials, but by 1724–49 this figure was over 17%. Areas close to London suffered sharp falls in their levels of population between 1670 and 1720 (Smith 1990).

London and all surrounding towns also shared certain upheavals and changes which are national in scope. The dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s and 1540s had a direct and enduring effect on the topography and archaeology of towns. Whole areas of each town, previously private precincts, were thrown open and claimed for secular use; new streets, new neighbourhoods, new ghettos of immigrants quickly appeared. In London, and probably elsewhere, the former precincts were quickly colonized by new communities of immigrants from the countryside and from abroad. There had no doubt always been a large number of urban poor and homeless, and probably shanty towns on the edges of urban settlements; but the 16th century is when urban authorities thought the problems of vagrancy and public order were both new and related problems.

With clear destruction levels and new buildings, some (but not many) with distinctive industrial overtones, the Dissolution is a clear archaeological objective. The material survives to be recorded in Surrey towns, on a large scale as at Blackfriars, Guildford (Poulton & Woods 1984) or on a small scale as seen when scrutinizing individual walls of apparent medieval character in Chertsey (Jones 1998a). The Reformation is far less studied and yet potentially equally rewarding. The archaeology of churches at this time is hardly developed, partly because churches have mostly been in constant use since the 16th century, and have changed their interiors many times since then. Later, the archaeology of the nonconformist movement is also worth archaeological study: there were early Quaker meeting-houses in Dorking (about 1702), Esher (1793), Godalming (1701) and Reigate (1688) (Butler 1999; Stell 2002, 315–28). It would be interesting to enquire whether religious dissent was particularly an urban phenomenon. In 1811 Lysons claimed that the first meeting of the Presbyterians in the country was held at Wandsworth in 1572 (Lysons 1811, **1**, 383).

Town leaders espoused classicism in their public buildings and in the more substantial decorative components of their own houses, and this was for a reason. Advanced Protestant reformers deliberately created complete innovations in architecture such as Somerset House in the Strand (1547–52) to mark a complete break with the past (Wells-Cole 1997, 12–14). Similarly, as the Reformation had stripped away urban ceremony, ritual and forms of social organization orchestrated by the Church, towns themselves were trying to find a new symbolic vocabulary. Town halls and market halls were built in large numbers, or embellished with classical detail such as a civic porch added to a medieval building (eg King's Lynn); but sometimes, as at Staines, deliberately plain (fig 14.2). By the middle of the 17th century, civic buildings had a common architecture which was the focal point and 'front door' of the town itself, and sometimes proclaimed it so (fig 14.3).

A fourth aspect which merits urban archaeological research is the post-Reformation town house. Before 1550, the leaders of small town and county society no doubt had large and distinctive houses, but our knowledge of them is not great. After this date, in contrast, some of their mansions survive, perhaps only one or two in a town (like Tonbridge), occasionally more (as in Chester or York), or in records (in London and Southwark). In the larger centres such as London, we might use these houses as the starting-point of a study of bourgeois culture, specifically post-Reformation and increasingly nationwide in character (in that one town began to look like another, and the habits of their citizens likewise). During the 17th century there was a remarkable urban culture in Holland, which comprised buildings, artefacts and attitudes; there should be the same in Britain. London, with its immediate hinterland, would be the place to start, but the point here is that by 1600 we may perceive that richer townspeople everywhere were becoming more self-conscious, more desirous of joining a national club than of continuing to be embedded in their localities.

Surrey towns in the London orbit, 1450–1600

By 1450, the demands of London were beginning to shape the countryside and the small towns. By 1600, the nearer parts of Surrey, Hertfordshire, Essex and Kent probably shared with Middlesex a concentration of market gardening – growing fruit and vegetables for the capital's tables. This area also concentrated on producing butter, eggs and milk, pork and bacon (Fisher 1935, repr 1990, 70–1). After 1640, vegetable gardens began to occupy the former common fields of Croydon (Thick 1985, 507).

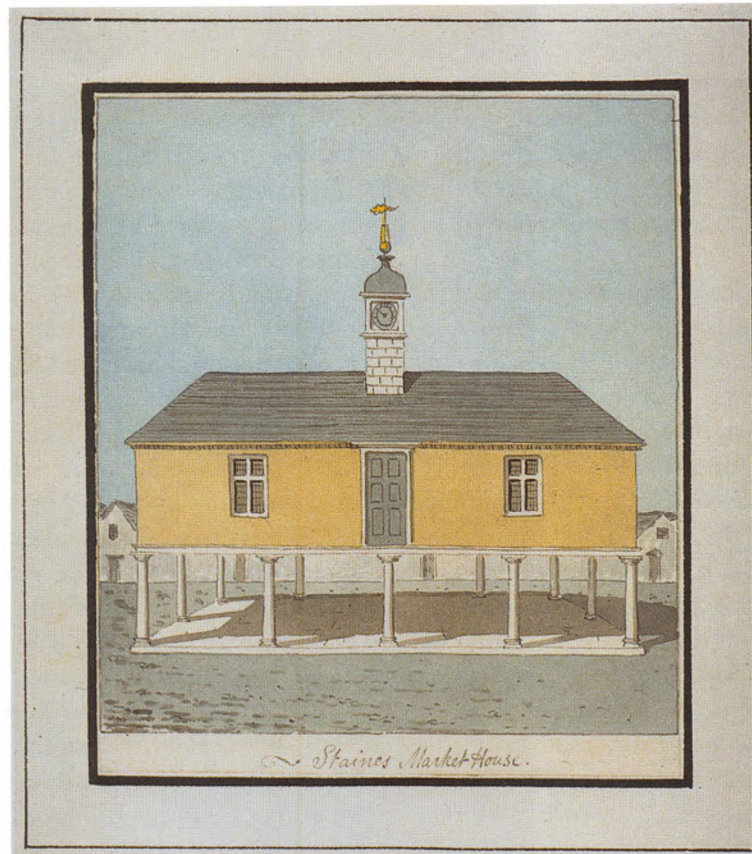

Fig 14.2 The Market House at Staines, drawn by John Oldfield about 1820. This simple building seems to be of 17th-century date. There presumably was an external stair to the door to the council chamber on the first floor, which for some reason is not shown. Guildhall Library (32496)

Outside the central zone, London's demands on more distant sources of supply for food were more selective, as we have already seen in the medieval period: now grain, malt, and cattle came from more or less specific counties or regions. As before, towns such as Kingston, Reigate and Croydon specialized or grew as regional centres. The consequent intensification of agriculture in south-east England may have pushed major industrial areas away from the capital. It is noticeable, stated Fisher (1971, 196), that in the 16th and early 17th centuries there were considerable textile industries in Surrey and Kent and a flourishing iron industry in the Weald; but by 1700 the textile industries had almost disappeared and the Wealden iron industry was languishing. A contributory factor was that London, from 1550,

Fig 14.3 The Market House at Kingston, drawn by Nathaniel Whittock in 1829. With the exception of the statue of Queen Anne of 1706 by Francis Bird, who also carved the west pediment at St Paul's. The degree to which the style of both buildings was metropolitan has yet to be researched in detail. Guildhall Library (28974)

rapidly increased its use of sea coal from Newcastle; this freed the land in the environs of the capital of the necessity to produce wood fuel, and thus it could now turn even more to food production (Keene 2000, 68). In the middle of the 17th century new crops were introduced: beans, peas, lettuce, asparagus, clover, artichokes. All these changes might be charted by archaeological work.

It was not good news for all towns. Some markets were in decline in the 16th century, such as Bletchingley, Haslemere and Leatherhead; at Staines, it seems that by 1593 the church stood in an area of dereliction, about a quarter of a mile from the rest of the town (*VCH Middlesex*, **3**, 16). Other towns in contrast prospered or improved, for instance Godalming, Chertsey and Dorking; the small amount of excavated evidence, such as a house site in Godalming (Poulton 1998), might be placed in this context. Chertsey profited from being on the river (should we think of it as a small port?), and Dorking was a regional market for poultry. Being a staging post on the road to London was good for small towns, as noted above, and this was the case in many other parts of England, for instance Towcester, Market Harborough, Stamford and Grantham to the north, or Thetford in Norfolk. It might be suggested that the fortunes of towns in the South East at this period were linked in large measure to their relations with London.

One dimension worth further exploration is the relation between a small town and large rural industries. The countryside on the Surrey-Hampshire border, around Farnborough and Hawley, was the site of a flourishing pottery industry in the 16th and 17th centuries, producing what is now called Border Ware (Pearce 1992; 1999). Border Wares are found in Surrey towns (Fryer & Selley 1997; Jones 1998a & b), throughout the London area and south-east England; and much further afield, such as in the American colonies until the 1620s. At Jamestown in Virginia, they are one of the most common kinds of everyday household wares. Perhaps the London-based Virginia Company had something to do with this, supplying the early colonists with pots until their own pottery production could begin. This Surrey-Hampshire industry must have been working through London networks. Similarly, the links through the small towns with the two Wealden industries, iron and glass-making, could be further elucidated. Both must have looked to London for their markets. The Wealden glass industry had medieval precedents in Surrey, and started up again in the late 16th century; the 'lack of reliable archaeological evidence' from the Weald is seen to be a stumbling-block for research, and future investigation is rated as a high priority (Crossley 1990, 226–32).

Traditionally, the late 16th century also sees the rise of the gentry. Who were these people? There had always been, since at least 1300, a metropolitan feel about the style of some rural mansions, and this became more intense in the late 16th century. The Elizabethan country house, joyously quirky and seemingly independent in its architectural flamboyance, probably reflected in part the civility of the urban and especially London mansion. Provincial builders like the Smythsons came to the capital to absorb new architectural ideas (Girouard 1983). We need studies in all the Home Counties of the houses and rural estates of individuals who made fortunes out of provisioning towns, which is one of the main characteristics of the gentry. Smith (1992) on Hertfordshire is a start. But we should not particularly look for the large Elizabethan mansion. To quote A G Dickens in his study of the English Reformation, 'nothing can be more misleading to students of Tudor and Stuart England than a visit to Burghley House, to Montacute, to Audley End, to Hardwick Hall' because 'these superb piles did not belong to gentlemen of anything resembling average resources' (Dickens 1989, 189). Archaeological study of the gentry and their estates in Surrey, and especially their use of the towns, seems to be lacking.

The themes which might be explored in Surrey for the period 1450 to 1600, therefore, are the specializations of small towns, the fortunes of towns on roads (and rivers) which led to London, towns and rural industries like Border Ware pottery, and the use of towns by the gentry class.

Reflections of the metropolis, 1600–1700

By the early 17th century, it has been suggested, all the land including the towns around London for a distance of 15 to 20 miles was essentially part of the capital so far as goods, trade and prices were concerned (Chalklin 2000, 56). The landscape was a rather surreal mixture of rural and urban elements (fig 14.4). A ring of market towns between 20 and 40 miles from London served as collecting points for London dealers; one of the largest was Farnham (Dyer 2000, 437). For some foodstuffs, the regulations in London were shared with the surrounding towns: in 1632 it was argued that the assize of bread should be regulated by the price of wheat in Uxbridge, Brentford, Kingston, Hampstead, Watford, St Albans, Hertford, Croydon and Dartford (Fisher 1935, 65). By the early 18th century the costs and prices on a typical Surrey farm were higher than in most other parts of the country, because of the strength of metropolitan demand (Bowden 1985, 85). This was probably the case decades earlier.

Four matters may be worth investigation: London tastes in (secular) architecture and building construction, including gardens; consumer goods and the

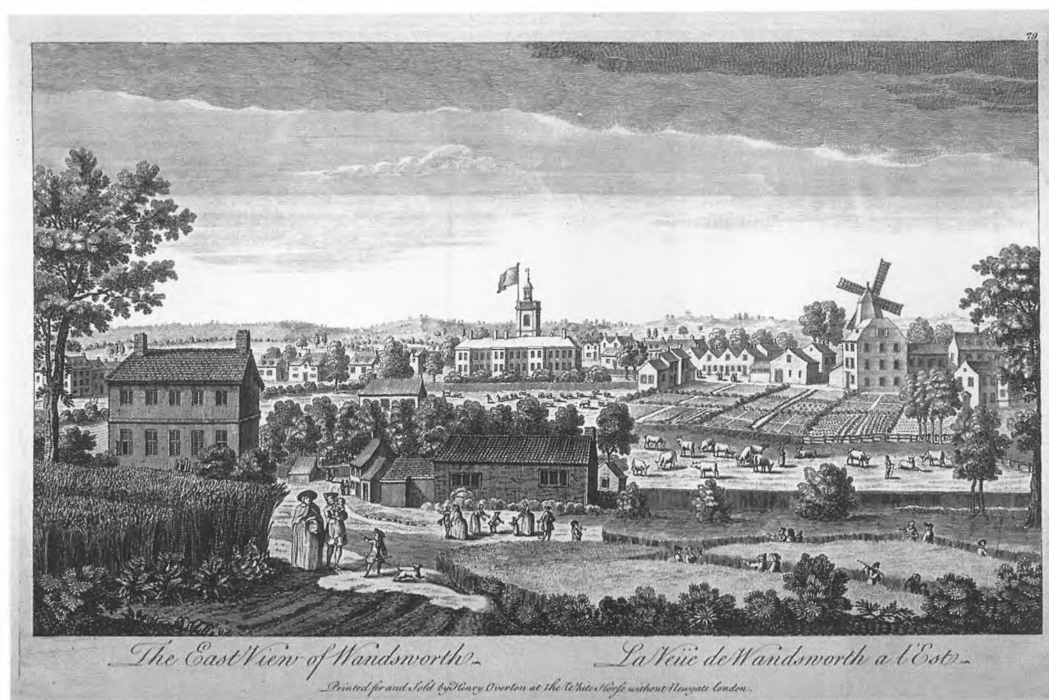

Fig 14.4 Wandsworth from the east, about 1750, by an anonymous observer. The church tower of about 1630 survives. Around it in this picture are fields and a windmill, but also small urban terraces deposited in the fields, the first hints of what was to follow. Guildhall Library (22190)

role of London in their spreading; the archaeological consequences of trading with London; and London culture and the emergence of polite society by 1700.

In Surrey, there is more surviving evidence of the 17th century London architectural style called Artisan Mannerism than in any other county. It is 'at its best quite up to the best of the Court style' and 17th century houses and their interiors mark 'the first point at which Surrey makes a contribution to the history of English architecture as a whole' (Nairn & Pevsner 1971, 43, 44). The prime example of this is Kew Palace, built for a merchant in 1631. This house is a City product, a town house in the countryside. The slightly later panelled room from Poyle Park, Tongham, nearly as far west as you can go in Surrey, now stands in the Museum of London, with a ceiling from a separate London house, as a model metropolitan interior. Later still in the century, there are urban terraces in rural but polite enclaves, such as Old Palace Terrace, of 1692, at Richmond Green (fig 14.5); the modern village of upper class residences is not a new idea. From this date, between 1690 and 1730, there survives a remarkable number of prestigious houses built in north Surrey, which represents another wave of London influence (Nairn & Pevsner 1971, 49). A villa like Eagle House, Mitcham (1705), is thought to be a direct transplant from central London, though in truth we have not yet provided the models in the centre of the metropolis (I am sure they will be found). But certainly the compact 18th century villa had arrived in Surrey, and within the first decade of the century.

Related to this was the passion for gardens and parks. The formal garden and fashions for a managed landscape spread from London throughout the South East during the 17th century, with one epicentre being the Thames-side villas and palaces at Twickenham, Hampton Court, Richmond and Kew (Brandon & Short 1990, 238–47); a notable example is the garden laid out at Moor Park near Farnham by Sir William Temple after 1686, with its Dutch affinities (Hunt & de Jong 1988, 245–7). In his *Tour through the whole island of Great Britain* in 1738, Defoe wrote that 'the ten miles from Guildford to Leatherhead make one continuous line of gentlemen's houses [...] their parks and gardens almost touching each other'.

At the level of ordinary buildings, we still need to chart how features of construction – the use of timber, brick and stone – changed during the 17th century. There is no comprehensive summary of this matter for any part of the London area, except for the work of Smith (1992) on Hertfordshire. In the Rape of Hastings in Sussex, study has shown that there are clear changes in the way both rural and urban houses were built (Martin & Martin 1987). From the late 16th century wall braces were no longer set to be visible, but were made to be covered, and crown-post roofs were no longer built, giving way to side-purlin or clasped-purlin roofs; ovolo mouldings appeared in window frames. From about 1650 close-studding went out of favour, and straight (as opposed to curved) raking struts were widely used in frames. After about 1680 first-floor crossbeams were lodged into bressumers rather than jointed into principal posts, timber window casements were now fitted with

Fig 14.5 Old Palace Terrace, Richmond Green. By the 1690s, terraces of houses in central London style were spreading into north Surrey. Photograph John Schofield

iron window frames, and Flemish bond appeared in brickwork. All these changes might be sought in Surrey buildings of the period, and the evidence from central London (in chance finds of dendro-dated pieces of carpentry, or from engravings) should also be fitted into this picture to see if, as might be expected, some of these changes began in the capital (straight raking struts, for instance, are shown in engravings of buildings which probably dated from the 1640s). Eight of the nine Surrey towns studied by O'Connell in 1977 had secular buildings dating to before 1550 on their streets (Bletchingley, Dorking, Farnham, Godalming, Guildford, Haslemere, Leatherhead and Reigate); all nine, including Chertsey this time, had (and hopefully still have) buildings dating to between 1550 and 1700. I have the impression that only a small amount of recording work has been undertaken on standing buildings in Surrey towns, for instance in Kingston (Nelson 1981), as opposed to work in the medieval and post-medieval countryside round about (eg Harding 1976; Gray 1980; 2002).

One strong element in traditional historical and archaeological thinking about the 17th century is that the Great Fire of London in 1666 had effects, not only on the capital, but on future designs of streets, buildings and services in other towns. A large area of the City of London was indeed destroyed in the Great Fire, and the area rebuilt in brick. The catastrophe was noted in towns in England and abroad, and the reconstruction of London in brick was imitated when fire struck elsewhere, such as at Warwick and Northampton. City of London parishes made collections for the relief of people affected by the fire in Northampton, even while their own city was rebuilding. But the Great Fire has had a distorting effect on scholarship; we know far more about the new brick houses than their more numerous contemporaries, the timber-framed buildings. The Fire, destructive though it was, devastated only about one-third of the conurbation of London then standing. Within the area of the Fire a new city of brick and occasionally stone arose; but around it, a larger area remained timber framed for generations to come. Much has been made of the apparent newness of these houses and the related phenomenon of residential squares (McKellar 1999). The latter had begun in the 1640s at Covent Garden and Lincoln's Inn Fields, west of the City and outside the area of the Fire, and there were more on the outskirts of the City, on both the east and west sides, in the 1680s. But were the houses, sometimes in rows, really new and thus a modernizing phenomenon? Probably not. The plan types of houses after the Fire had all existed before the Fire. The arrangement of rooms inside them had not changed; neither had their shape, except for some regulation of height. They were probably more sanitary, and now lasted longer. But in many ways, they were only the Tudor houses reclothed in brick. Shops were still shops, and for several decades after 1666 they were allowed to have projecting signs outside just as they had before the Fire. The great majority of buildings after the Fire had the same functions as before.

Did the history of ordinary houses in Surrey towns reflect these metropolitan changes? We need a study of houses in Surrey towns from the medieval period to the 18th century, as Smith has produced for Hertfordshire, so that we can see when brick buildings undoubtedly influenced by post-Fire London regulations and practice appeared in the smaller towns, as in Hertford by about 1670 (Smith 1992, 164–5). Further, the spread of brick buildings may reflect local wealth and industry as much as metropolitan taste, as shown by the present fabric of Farnham, which in the 18th century grew prosperous from local production of hops. The town is said to have had a 'hop period' (O'Connell 1977, 21–2).

People in towns around London also participated in London's new and fashionable consumer patterns which would leave artefacts in the ground. Joan Thirsk has argued that there was a deliberate govern-

ment policy to encourage the native manufacture of consumer goods from 1540 onwards (Thirsk 1978). The capital led England in smoking tobacco and consuming sugar from about 1600, and tea was imported in great quantities after about 1680. There were new eating habits, cooking techniques, new drinks and domestic decorations; there were new industries concerned with 'import substitution' such as glass-making and metalworking, or luxuries such as joined furniture, coaches, clocks and books. China (pottery) was virtually unknown in 1675, but a normal part of the household in London and the area around by 1715 (Weatherill 1996; Boulton 2000, 324–6). By 1650, coal had replaced wood as the main domestic fuel (or at least, the adoption of coal in the extensive and increasing new suburbs was creating alarming air pollution). From the second decade of the 17th century there were several flourishing industries in Southwark, notably brewing and the making of new styles in pottery, especially tin glazed (delftware) (Edwards 1974).

Archaeologically, pottery is at present one of the few indicators of change and influence. Apart from pottery, the archaeological material culture of town and country throughout Britain was fairly uniform. Local manufacture of objects in most materials cannot be differentiated from imports, from other regions or from abroad. Pottery, however, included distinctive foreign wares. A good example is provided by the excavation of a site in Moulsham Street, Chelmsford, the periods running from about 1400 to about 1800 (Cunningham & Drury 1985). Here copper-alloy, iron, bone, stone and glass objects and debris are described, but the parallels are local or at best regional. This may be because objects in these materials cannot at present be sourced as to whether they are local or foreign in origin; this may change as archaeological science develops in the future. For the present, as shown on the Chelmsford site, pottery is far more significant, with Metropolitan Slipware perhaps from Harlow, salt-glazed stoneware and slipware from Staffordshire, redware from the Low Countries, slipwares and stonewares from Germany, maiolica from the Southern Netherlands, and fragments of pots from Italy and Spain. We can cite a Surrey parallel: a small site in Croydon, excavated in 1968–70, found sherds of early 17th century Frechen stoneware from Germany in the remains of a small building with cob walls, at the rear of a property facing the medieval church (Drewett 1974, 5, 14). Thus the small towns probably exhibited this juxtaposition of foreign material in humble settings.

There are links between the rise in consumer spending and my third strand, London's provision of foreign goods. In the 16th century, trade for England generally and London in particular was predominantly export led; but in the 17th century, it became increasingly import led. There was a greater appetite for imports, for instance of the new commodities sugar and tobacco. The increased emphasis on imports led to greater prominence for the London merchants who handled the traffic and made lots of money from it (Fisher 1971, 188–90). Many of the imported commodities came from the new colonies, especially after the acquisition of Barbados in 1627 and the invasion of Jamaica in 1655, both by the English. By 1700, money made in colonial trade must have been diffusing through London into the surrounding area, and there must be an archaeology of colonial trade to be developed for the capital and the smaller towns.

The trade in imports was an important contributory factor in the emergence of polite society, which took its lead in everything from London. This may have begun earlier in the 17th century, but can certainly be observed from the 1670s. Traditional culture focused inwards on local customs and practices, whereas its polite counterpart looked outwards towards London and beyond to the Continent (Borsay 1989). London was both the actual and cultural gateway to the rest of Europe.

To a large extent the new forms of socializing and culture filled the vacuum left by the Reformation. As Collinson has written with only slight intended exaggeration, 'in 1740 there would be assembly rooms, coffee shops, theatres, the first public libraries, musical events, all the necessities of a polite and cultivated existence. In 1600 there was only religion' (Collinson 1988, 49). This is an interesting idea to examine archaeologically: there should be more evidence of secular and civic 'culture' in the strata of the 17th century.

A peculiar example of metropolitan culture was the spa, and Epsom was one of the first. Tree-lined walks had been laid out in London since 1616, but the first public walk in England to be called a parade was in Epsom, to be later followed by Bath (Girouard 1990, 147). But Epsom was only filled with tourists in the summer; in winter it hibernated, largely deserted. But like other resorts it pioneered new building and landscape forms such as the assembly room by about 1710, bowling greens by 1711, and circular tracks for coaches, just like in Hyde Park (Borsay 1989, 141–2, 158, 174, 180). Its popularity also had an effect on nearby Ewell, which changed from being an important village to little more than the last port of call on the way from London to Epsom (Titford 1973). Thus pressures from the capital were transmitted through small towns to the villages and countryside.

I do not mean to suggest that small towns in London's orbit had no other function than to reflect the capital. Equally important, probably, to people in the towns was the growth of provision of services to

the surrounding countryside. By 1700, the spread of retail shops in small towns had generally eclipsed the former predominance of markets and fairs. At this time, over half the urban population of England lived in small towns of fewer than 5000 inhabitants which deserve study on their own terms. Further, the great majority of gentry could not afford many visits to London, and opted instead for longer stays in county towns or resorts (Clark 1984, 22–3). So there may be aspects of the larger towns in Surrey, especially Guildford, which rivalled the capital with their own forms of civilized culture. Many small towns had cultural roles in the 17th and 18th centuries (Reed 1995). Thus we should not rush to judgement and claim that all improvements were the result of contact with London; some may have been due to local initiative.

In 1673 Surrey had seven market towns which gives an average of 108 square miles per town; in national terms, a slightly larger average area for each town than Westmorland or Herefordshire, and way behind neighbouring counties Essex (21 markets, average 73 square miles per town) and Kent (31 markets, 53 square miles per town) (Dyer 2000, 430). So it seems that in the 1670s Surrey was less urbanized, in terms of frequency of towns, than Essex or Kent.

Conclusions and suggestions for future work

It is fair to suggest that by 1700 the traditional, semi-autonomous world of the country town everywhere in England was beginning to be superseded by the dominance of London in many affairs. The objective here has been to suggest how archaeological work might elucidate the process. This has been a series of outline questions, not a summary of recent work, and I would hope that archaeologists in Surrey towns take up these questions.

Three overall suggestions are made. First, we should see the period 1450 to 1700 as one continuous phase, with the Reformation and Dissolution as the main turning points in every town's history. Secondly, what is at present only partially known, and should be susceptible to archaeological investigation, is how London fed and clothed itself, especially in the period of its exceptional growth in the 16th and early 17th centuries. And thirdly, London's relationship to the towns around it was probably always selective, and thus a local speciality would give the small town strength.

The period up to 1700 is one of declining, if spirited, small town independence, in Surrey and other counties around London. Thereafter, to play with the question in the title of this paper, London really did do for you. But perhaps it was not all bad; in 1600 the journey from Farnham to London, on foot or by cart, was in six stages (marked by towns or villages) which may have taken between four and six days, whereas now, by train on a good day, it takes about one hour.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Geoff Egan and Jacqueline Pearce for comments incorporated into this text.

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