Urban Landscapes

John H Williams

Contents

Resource Assessment

Introduction

Urban archaeology and history are treated under the various period chapters elsewhere in this framework, but it was felt that it would be profitable to undertake a separate overview of the evolving urban landscape from Roman times through to the present day. There is a need both to draw out common themes and at the same time to consider the changing character and role of towns through the ages. Additionally methodological approaches transcending period boundaries can be examined. Given the prime focus occupied by archaeology and material remains of the past within SERF the chapter very much concentrates on the period up to the late 16th century, although there is brief discussion of towns in the more recent past.

The study of urban history probably really started with 18th century antiquarians (Sweet 1996; cf. for example in relation to Kent, Hasted 1778-99) although an interest in urban topography had been shown by the mapping of John Speed at the beginning of the 17th century (1610/11). In the Victorian period there was an increasing focus on the legal status of boroughs and issues of incorporation through scholars such as Maitland (1898) and this continued into the 20th century through Ballard, Tait (Ballard 1913; Tait 1936; Ballard and Tait 1923) and others. At the same time economic and social issues came more to the fore, both in relation to individual towns and more generally, perhaps reaching a culmination in the three volume Cambridge Urban History of Britain (Palliser 2000; Clark 2000; Daunton 2001). Urban archaeology as such really only came into focus after the Second World War, although, in Kent in the

late 17th century, William Somner assigned Canterbury's defences to the Roman period (1640; Champion 2007: 18-19) and there were occasional archaeological interventions, as with James Pilbrow trying to map Canterbury's Roman street pattern through observations in drainage trenches in 1868 (Pilbrow 1871; Champion 2007: 18-19). Urban archaeology in the South-East, as elsewhere, is barely fifty years old and in its early days, with pioneering work by the likes of Sheppard Frere at Canterbury, was rather small scale (Frere and Stow 1983; Frere et al. 1987). Important research on the urban topography of Canterbury was undertaken by Urry (1967), utilising the city's medieval rentals. Only, however, with the establishment of archaeological units in the 1970s, including the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, do we begin to get the broader archaeological picture and much here is owed to the increasing awareness of the threat of urban development at the time of the publication of 'The Erosion of History' in 1972 (Heighway 1972). The 1970s also saw the development of urban plan-form analysis, often incorporated in historic towns surveys such as those for Sussex (Aldsworth and Freke 1976) and Surrey (O'Connell 1977). How far then have we advanced since then? What has been the impact of PPGs 15 and16 and subsequent planning policy guidance relating to archaeology?

Before looking at these questions perhaps it is necessary briefly to consider what is meant by a town. In the 1970s the possession of a number of attributes perhaps held sway: a market, mint, social differentiation, legal autonomy etc. (Biddle 1976: 100). Susan Reynolds' definition, however, is possibly best or at least simplest: a permanent human settlement where a significant proportion of the population lives off non-agricultural occupations and which forms a social unit more or less distinct from the surrounding countryside (1977: ix). This does, however, present some difficulties with London suburbs.

In approaching towns, Carver, in *Arguments in Stone* (1993: 80), identified three approaches:

- the narrative – telling the story
- the processual – looking for economic, social and other cause and effect
- the structuralist – pursuing symbols and meaning in towns

Perhaps we need to go further and differentiate between single and multiple narratives (relating to individual towns and urban systems) and explanations and models for individual towns and groups of towns. All the approaches are valid, giving us a variety of answers. We ask different questions and get different answers.

The evolution of towns – a chronological overview

With the above in mind the following is a broad review of the urban landscapes of the four counties, in order to get some feel for the current state of knowledge. Starting at the beginning, or at least in Roman times, one can see two major towns or cantonal capitals, Canterbury and Chichester. For both the issues of origins are interesting. Chichester is tied into the debate about Fishbourne and client kingdoms (Manley 2008: 41-56, 87-100). Canterbury also has a late Iron Age inheritance, perhaps in the form of an *oppidum* but perhaps as a religious focus (Blockley et al. 1995: 7ff; P

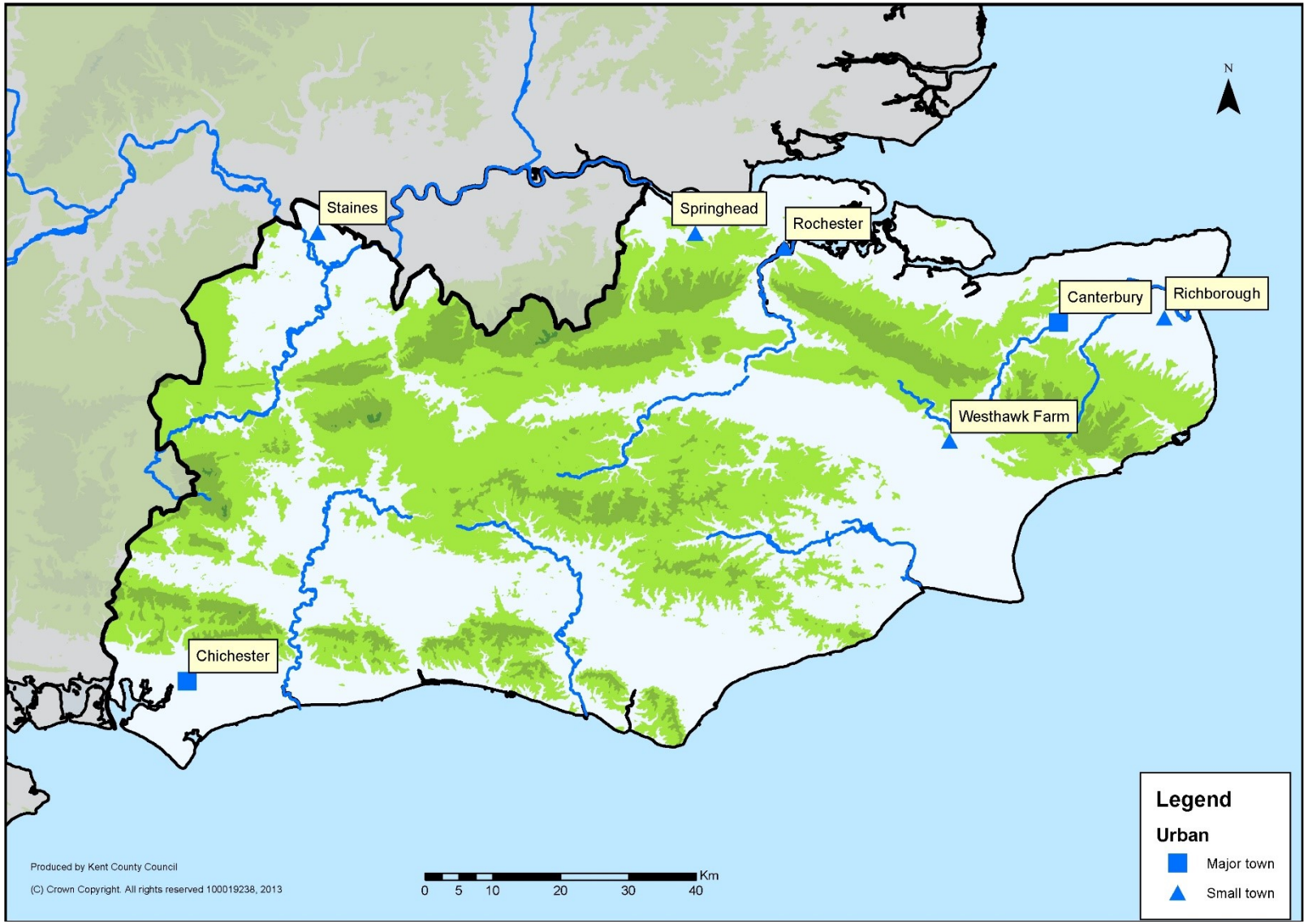

Figure 1 Map of Roman towns in the SERF study area

Bennett pers. com.). What was the nature of any early Roman military presence at either? For both the main elements of a street pattern have been identified but at Canterbury there is more in the way of structural evidence, both for public buildings and for private properties. For both there is artefactual and environmental evidence. All this evidence is then interpreted essentially by reference to current understanding of similar-sized Roman towns elsewhere in Britain and throughout the Roman Empire. Much is known, especially for Canterbury, but there are gaps in the narratives relating to both these places.

Our perception of Romano-British 'small towns' has in the past also largely derived from outside the South-East (see Burnham 1990). In Kent, however, there is now evidence from large scale geophysical survey and excavation at Westhawk Farm near Ashford (Booth et al. 2008; Williams 2003: 225), there is also important geophysical survey data from Richborough (Millett and Wilmott 2003: 191) and our understanding of Springhead has been much increased (Williams 2003: 225; Andrews et al. 2011; Biddulph et al. 2011; Barnett et al. 2011), but there is a lack of clarity about what lies within the walls of Rochester (Burnham 1990: 76ff; Kent County Council 2005: 9-11). In Surrey Staines can now be confirmed as a small town (Burnham 1990: 307ff; Bird 2004: 49, 55ff; Jones and Poulton 2010. Overall we may think that we have a feel for the Romano-British town and countryside of the South-East but we need to admit that we have to get beyond the general model for towns in the Roman Empire and fill in some more real detail.

In this respect the Anglo-Saxon period is even more challenging. Based on work at Hamwic, Lundenwic and Ipswich and continental sites such as Dorestad we search for the Middle Saxon emporia, or controlled ports of trade in the South-East, and latch on to the *wic* element in place-names such as Sandwich and Fordwich, but clear evidence is lacking (Biddle 1976: 112ff). Physical remains of settlements of this period have not been identified in the region but, on the basis of coin evidence, a cluster of locations in East Kent, including ports at Reculver, Richborough and Sandwich, toll stations at Sarre and Fordwich and Canterbury itself, may collectively have exceeded London in terms of population and business (Keene 2000: 553). Moving into the 9th century, Canterbury can be seen to be the dominant mint in England, producing 35% of the coinage, followed by East Anglia, London, Rochester and Wessex (Metcalf 1995: 183). Metcalf argues that this, coupled with the loss pattern of the coinage, is evidence for Canterbury, London and Rochester being engaged in long-distance trade (1995: 195). From that time there is important documentary evidence from Canterbury, - charters conveying city land, regulations on the distance between properties and the implication that the townspeople had formed themselves into some sort of corporate organisation (Brooks 1984: 22ff). But what exactly did Canterbury look like on the ground?

In this period there is the start of a move from controlled trade to commerce based more on supply and demand, with the rise of urban craftsmen and traders. Blair has underlined the role of minsters in changing to this more urban world (Blair 2005: 330ff; 2018, 164, 350), but others might see the hand of secular authority. With good documentary evidence for *villae regales* (royal estate centres) and also for minsters we need to see what the archaeological evidence is.

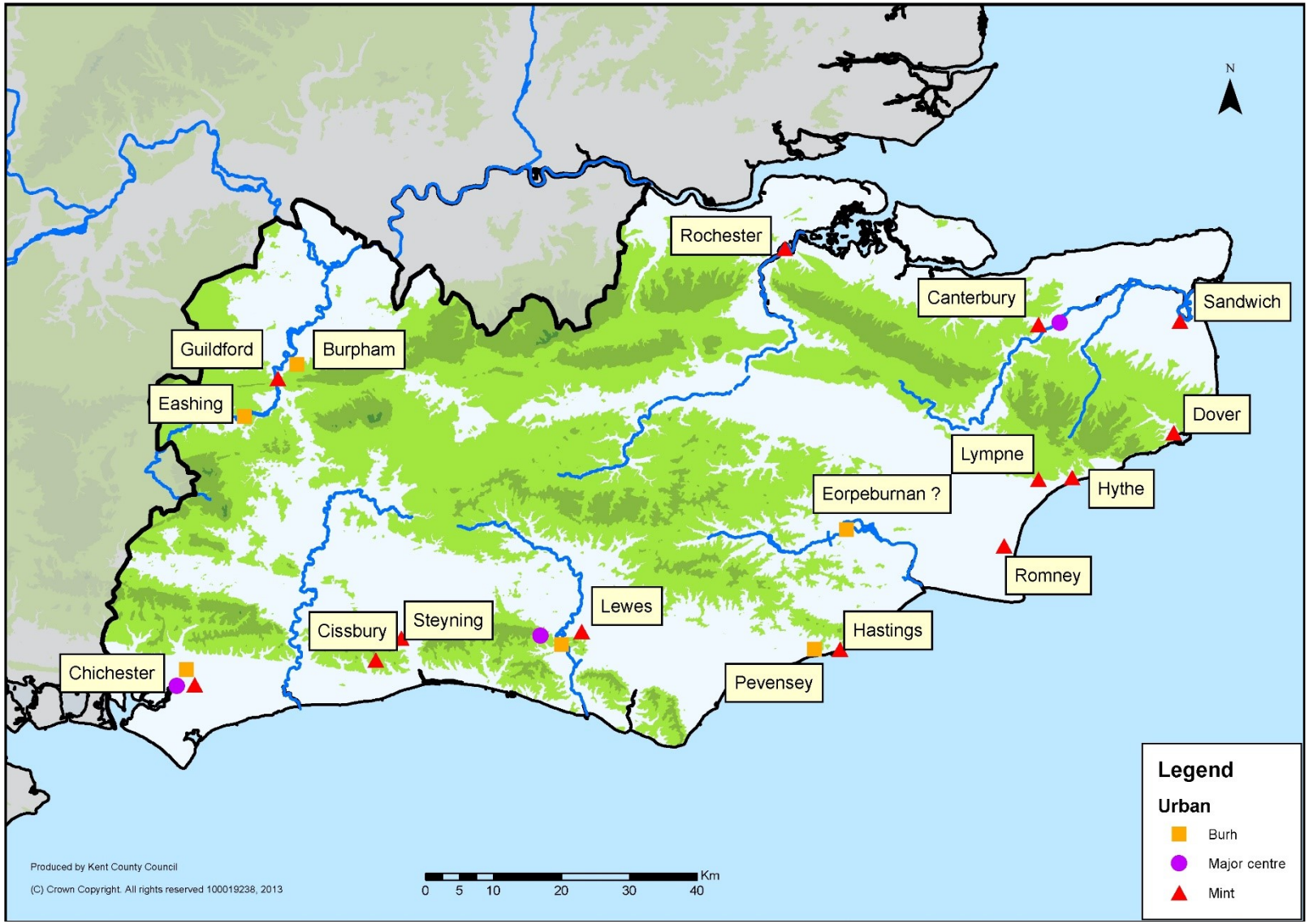

Figure 2 Late Anglo-Saxon centres in the SERF study area

In the Late Saxon period recent thinking has been dominated by Wessex's Alfredian burhs and the towns of the Danelaw (Biddle 1976: 124ff). Within the SERF area burhs are listed in the Burghal Hidage at Eorpeburnan (Newenden or Rye?), Hastings, Lewes, Burpham and Chichester (Hill 1978) and at Eashing, Surrey. Kent is outside the area of the Burghal Hidage. Slightly later the Grateley Decree of Athelstan lists seven moneyers at Canterbury, three at Rochester, two at Lewes and one each at Hastings and Chichester (Whitelock 1955: 384). By Domesday mints had operated also at Cissbury, Steyning, Romney, Lympne, Hythe, Dover, Sandwich and Guildford. It is interesting to look at a national ranking based on the surviving coins from each mint (Dyer 2000: 750). Across the area a number of places can be identified as probable towns in the Late Saxon period, mainly it would appear linked to sea trade. These include, beyond those already mentioned, Dover, Fordwich, Guildford, Romney, Sandwich and Steyning (Tatton-Brown 1984; Gardiner and Greatorex 1997). The best evidence for what at least some towns of the period may have looked like derives from plan analysis of Lewes (Harris 2005: 29) and Guildford (Poulton 1987: 209) where the regular rectilinear pattern typical of Wessex has been postulated. Is this, however, typical? Steyning certainly seems to show a less formal layout (Gardiner and Greatorex 1997; Dyer 2003: 89). The point is that we are largely trying to fit somewhat limited archaeological evidence within a documentary framework and models derived from outside the South-East.

In Domesday Book the following places are identified as boroughs:

- Kent – Canterbury, Dover, Fordwich, Hythe, Rochester, Romney, Sandwich and Seasalter (Campbell 1962: 545)
- Surrey – Guildford (Lloyd 1962: 398)
- Sussex – Chichester, Hastings, Lewes, Pevensey, Steyning and Rye (King 1962: 463).

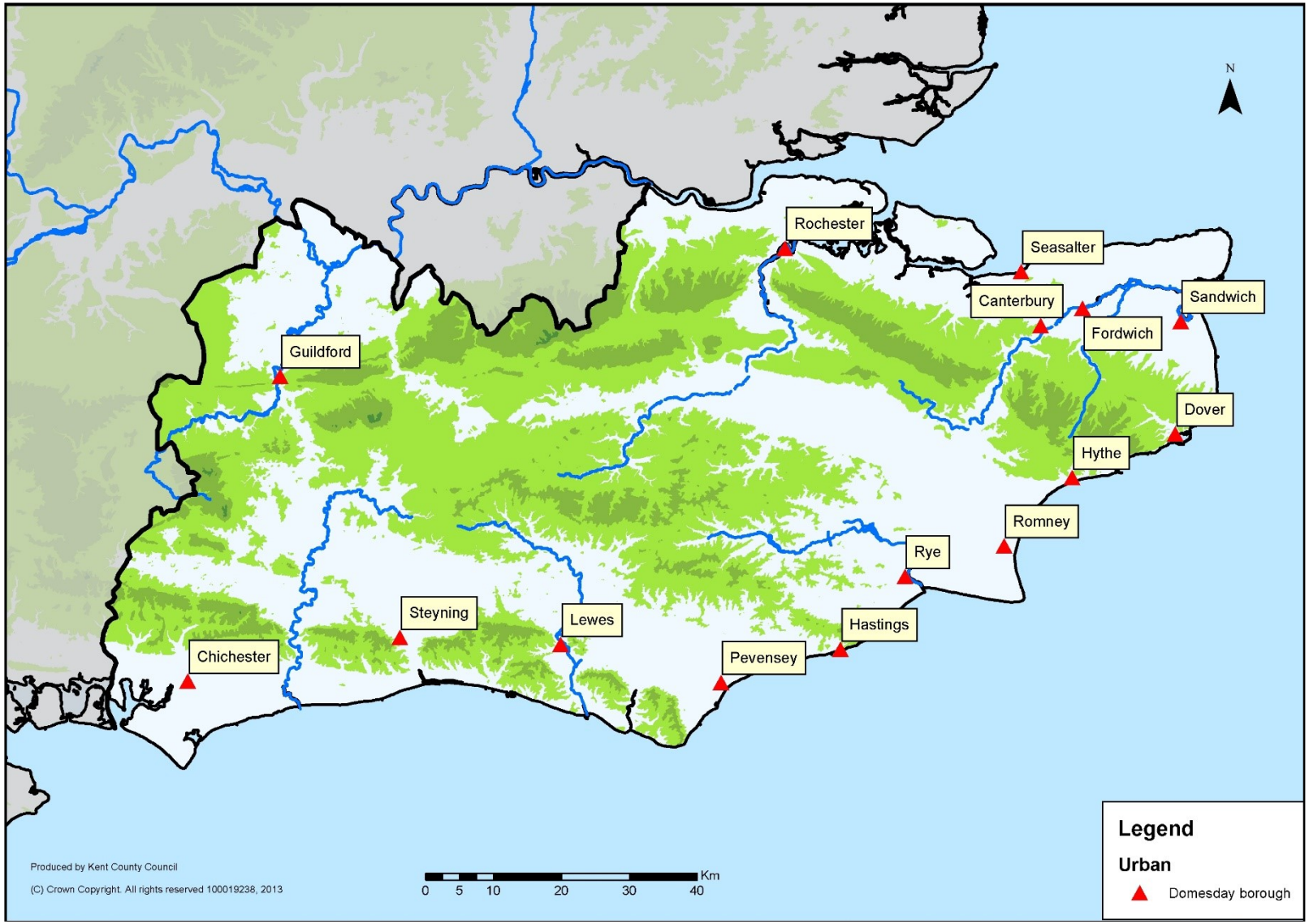

Figure 3 Late Saxon boroughs mentioned in the Domesday Book.

There are some other places that can be identified as markets or harbours. Table 1 indicates that less than ten places had more than a hundred houses.

Table 1 Numbers of Domesday Properties (from Dyer 2000: 754)

Canterbury	599
Lewes	458
Sandwich	415/445
Chichester	242
Dover	29+/449+
Romney	156
Steyning	123
Rochester	115+
Pevensey	111
Fordwich	86
Guildford	81
Rye	64
Seasalter	48
Hastings	24
Arundel	17

Note: *Jones and Poulton (2010), 43 suggest Domesday Book may indicate that there were 46 burgesses at Staines at the time and consequently that Staines was far more important than previously accepted.*

Within the medieval period there is something of an urban explosion in the South-East, even if many of these towns are little more than villages. It is interesting to note that in the greater South-East in 1100 Kent had the highest density of towns but the slowest rate of increase afterwards, so that by 1300 it had the lowest density – but the highest density of markets (Keene 2000: 572). Surrey, in contrast, had perhaps two towns before 1100, and a sprinkling by 1300, although all of them were very small.

We can get an impression of the ranking of towns from taxation returns (Tables 2-4). It must be remembered, however, that in all these rankings after Domesday Book the Cinque Ports are excluded, and some, at least, would have figured within these returns at some time. It is noticeable that, apart from Canterbury, throughout the Middle Ages there is no really large town but rather a number of small- to medium-sized ones. Named individuals appear increasingly in the documentary sources, leaving written evidence of their lives. There is also physical evidence in the form of castles, churches and other major structures in a number of places and standing vernacular buildings survive from towards the end of the period. A lot, however, is being based on plan-form analysis which has been a key analytical tool for the various extensive urban surveys (cf. e.g. Barley 1976 for the methodology).

Table 2 1334 Lay Subsidy National Ranking of Towns (from Dyer 2000: 755)

Rank	*Town*	*£*
15	Canterbury	599
55	Godalming	248
68	Chichester	220
97	Guildford	151

Table 3 1377 Poll Tax National Ranking of towns (from Dyer 2000: 758)

Rank	*Town*	*£*
13	Canterbury	2,574
48	Chichester	869
50	Maidstone	844?
68	Cranbrook	576
70	Rochester	570
72	Tenterden	546

Table 4 1524/25 Subsidy National Ranking of Towns by Tax-paying Population and by Taxable Wealth (from Dyer 2000: 761)

Tax-paying population			*Taxable wealth*	
Rank	*Town*	*Population*	*Rank*	*£*
9	Canterbury	784	10	269
26	Maidstone	480?	17	169
30	Rochester	437		
37	Dover	?	38	?
41	Rye	?	21	?
47	Chichester	301	54	63
	Gravesend		57	61
	Guildford		73	52
	Godalming		77	48
82	Lewes	207	84	43

Although it is only in the 13th century that charter and other documentary evidence becomes abundant it is clear that royal, seigneurial or ecclesiastical initiative was driving forward the establishment and development of towns from the 11th and 12th centuries, if not earlier. Castles were placed at existing towns such as Rochester, Lewes and Hastings and new castles, or at least a seigneurial presence, gave birth to towns as at Tonbridge, Reigate, Blechingley and Farnham. Monastic houses initiated towns as at Battle, Chertsey and West Malling and bishop's residences acted as stimuli, as at Charing, Mayfield and Farnham (see the various EUS; also Gardiner 1997: 64). In the 16th century what impact did royal palaces such as Richmond, Nonsuch, Oatlands and Woking have on urban development? Gardiner would see Mayfield, and also Wadhurst, Ticehurst and Wartling as 'permissive' settlements where towns grew up around a market (1997: 64). Some, such as Cranbrook and Tenterden may owe more to the development of the cloth industry and other industries and certainly growth at Godalming and Guildford, which originated long before, again is

clearly related to cloth. Perhaps here and more generally we can note the major continuing economic influence of London – Londoners using the services of dyers at Maidstone, Tenterden and Cranbrook (Keene 2000: 580). In Surrey the relationship with London, both the city and the wider urban area, is a key theme (Schofield 2004); indeed much of the development of the present county's towns will also have been significantly influenced from medieval times onwards by the prosperous and larger centres at Southwark, Richmond and Kingston now within the London orbit.

By this period there is much more documentary data and pride of place here must go to the 13th century rentals of Canterbury which Urry used to reconstruct the topography of the city (1967) and there is good archaeological and buildings evidence. Our understanding of medieval Chichester is not so full.

Three projects are worth noting. At New Winchelsea the Martins have successfully brought together the evidence of the standing structures with that from archaeology and documentary sources (Martin and Martin 2004). The gridded plan with a clear foundation date is certainly beneficial in developing a chronological framework. Similar work has been undertaken at Rye (Martin, Martin et al. 2009; Draper 2009) and a team led by Helen Clarke and Sarah Pearson has been working on Sandwich, again with excellent results (Clarke et al. 2010), but the absence of clear chronological reference points in the development of the town's plan presents considerable challenges. Many other places would benefit from such studies

Guildford and Lewes have had a fair amount of archaeological work but little of real scale until comparatively recently, and probably with a concentration on high status and religious structures. There is a need, however, to pull the evidence together (Andrews 2004: 183). Elsewhere archaeological investigations have been somewhat limited.

Apart from at Canterbury and Chichester urban excavation has for the most part concentrated on castles and other high status complexes (Guildford: Poulton 2005; Lewes: Drewett 1992) and religious houses (Guildford: Poulton and Wood 1984; Lewes: Gardiner et al. 1996; Lyne 1997). Significant investigation of urban dwellings and commercial areas are somewhat limited but Staines, for example, provides some useful information (Mckinley 2004; Jones and Poulton 2010) and the St James's area at Dover, between the historic town centre and the medieval castle has revealed an important occupation sequence from Norman times into the post-medieval period (Parfitt *et al*. 2006; Parfitt and Armour 2016). Consequently there are real gaps in knowledge in respect of how different activities were organised in towns, how towns related to their hinterlands and, based on the material evidence, what was the social structure within towns. In-depth multidisciplinary investigations on individual towns and their hinterlands are clearly needed.

Another aspect of towns where more effort is probably needed is the transition from the medieval to the post-medieval period. With the dissolution of the monasteries and disposal of large monastic estates one can see in a variety of places the virtual secularisation of the urban landscape. From the 13th century onwards towns had increasingly been gaining freedom from overlordship and now ecclesiastical influence was significantly diminished. As we go through the sixteenth century and beyond the urban landscape perceptibly changes.

When we get into the post-medieval and modern period there is a wealth of evidence from a variety of sources, including documentary, cartographical and structural, but not so much from archaeology. There are, for example, studies of Maidstone (Clark and Murfin 1995), Brighton (Carder 1990; Berry 2005) and Lewes (Brent 1993; Brent 2004), but town histories are often orientated to the interests of their respective authors. Much useful information can be found in the various Extensive Urban Surveys but it must be remembered that these are very much summary overviews. Perhaps a greater understanding will come out of Conservation Area Assessments (see beginning of Bibliography) and characterisation studies, although the purpose of these is very much geared to active management of the historic environment resource. Overall it might be true to say that the increase in physical remains and documentary sources for more recent centuries has to date been matched by a decrease in real analytical synthesis.

Approaches to the evidence

The preceding section has discussed our understanding of how towns have evolved in the South-East from Roman times. Various sources of evidence have been utilised and observations have been made on the nature and quality of the evidence relating to different periods and themes. Here an assessment will be made of the potential of different types of evidence more generally to contribute to our understanding of urban landscapes and also of how well that potential has been realised.

It is a truism that our knowledge of periods prior to the introduction of written records relies heavily on the material remains of the past and equally that as documentary sources become more plentiful from the 13th century onwards new avenues are opened up for historical exploration. Documentary material has been well used for the towns of the South-East in respect of individual towns (cf. the integrated archaeological/historical research at places such as Sandwich, Rye and Winchelsea already cited); general syntheses have tended to focus on specific subject areas (e.g. Mate 2006). In terms of the evolving urban hierarchy taxation returns have proved valuable reference points (see Tables 2-4) but the lack of entries for the Cinque Ports skews the regional data.

Virtually all the towns of the region have been subjected to plan-form analysis, from the studies of the 1970s (e.g. Aldsworth and Freke 1976; O'Connell 1977) through to the Extensive Urban Surveys of today. Cartographical and other sources have been skilfully combined although much of the thinking has inevitably been based on models derived from elsewhere and rarely has it been possible to provide a firm and precise chronological framework either for complete towns or their components. Nonetheless these analyses underpin investigative strategies for the towns of the region and GIS offers increased opportunities for more sophisticated mapping.

Archaeological evidence has enabled hypotheses to be tested and has converted written description into a physical reality, even though for the most part structural evidence is more two- than three-dimensional, with upstanding building elements rarely surviving. Again, too often with urban excavation small windows are being cut into the accumulated stratigraphy, enabling the testing of some specific hypotheses and providing a starting point for further speculation rather than a comprehensive

picture. The exceptions to the rule are large-scale work at Canterbury (e.g. Blockley et al. 1995; Hicks and Hicks 2001; Hicks 2015; Hicks and Houliston 2018) and Dover (see above), the investigations at Westhawk Farm (Booth et al. 2008) and the more than two hectares investigated in Lewes between 2005 and 2008 (Swift 2009). Experience with extensive strip, map and sample projects in the countryside has clearly indicated the advantages of large-scale work for understanding rural settlement dynamics spatially and chronologically. While, however, given current policy frameworks and the huge costs of large urban open-area excavation, major excavation programmes in towns are likely to remain a rarity, it is important to recognise that it will be difficult truly to plot the spatial and chronological evolution of a town based on limited sampling, even though valuable information will accrue.

Artefactual evidence has contributed considerably to the understanding of individual towns but little work has been undertaken in developing regional syntheses based on finds. The main exception to this is the research on coins, which is particularly useful in looking at the emerging economic role of towns in the Anglo-Saxon period (e.g. Keene 2000: 555f; Metcalf 1995). The use of pottery as an indicator for patterns of trade and commerce is hampered by the lack of a single regional fabric type series. The Portable Antiquities Scheme is providing new information, though more on rural as opposed to urban sites; since many of the objects are not then finding their way into publicly accessible archives it is imperative that recording through the Portable Antiquities Scheme is to a high standard.

Faunal and environmental remains are increasingly being collected and studied but coverage is still limited and there is little synthesis. Earlier studies were confined mainly to the study of animal bones, for example at Canterbury (Driver 1990; King 1982); at Steyning indications of butchery were examined (O'Connor 1979) as were hunting practices at Guildford (Sykes et al. 2005). The potential for fully integrated faunal and palaeoenvironmental analysis has, however, more recently been demonstrated in the medieval fishing quarter at Dover (Parfitt et al. 2006) and at the Romano-British small town at Springhead (Andrews et al. 2011; Barnett et al. 2011). Studies of Saxon faunal assemblages by Holmes (2011) and Poole (2011) will undoubtedly contribute to our understanding of the economic and social characteristics of Saxon towns and their hinterlands and provide approaches and models against which to define and test data from the South-East.

The study of historic buildings in towns is a much neglected subject although so much can be learned from them about the social and economic structure of towns. Since evidence from various towns suggests that the layout of buildings that survive from the late Middle Ages onwards owes much to the earlier historical development of the town, there can be important links with urban plan-form analysis and archaeology. The only major published studies in the region relate to New Winchelsea, Rye (Martin and Martin 2004; Martin et al. 2009) and Sandwich (Clarke et al. 2010), although there is important ongoing work in Faversham, Canterbury, Battle, Hastings and Farnham. In Farnham, investigations are being undertaken by the Surrey Domestic Buildings Research Group, which has recorded nearly 4,000 small buildings in Surrey (www.dbrg.org.uk); the use of dendrochronology is modifying the dating of buildings within the town. Far more needs to be done on the dating of urban buildings, both to understand the buildings themselves and also to provide firm reference points for documentary, archaeological and other research. This is not just an issue for our earliest medieval

town buildings in the region; indeed we probably know more about, or have at least investigated more thoroughly, the medieval and early modern buildings of the South-East rather than later ones. More generally not nearly enough use has been made of the powers initiated under PPG15. Intelligent recording prior to decision making, so that the results can be fed into decisions, has been shown to be effective elsewhere (Clark 2001; Meeson 2001), but that does require the availability of suitably experienced and competent specialists.

Urban Archaeological Databases have been compiled for Canterbury and Chichester and one for Dover is presently being undertaken. Extensive Urban Surveys have been completed for Kent, Surrey and East and West Sussex. All of these are proving invaluable in drawing together disparate sources of information for understanding the towns of the region. It must be remembered, however, that they are in effect position statements, providing starting points for informing further investigation rather than being end results in themselves. Regional syntheses provide broad overview frameworks, mainly at a summary level (Keene 2000).

Conclusion

Overall then there has been some excellent in depth work at a number of towns. Documentary research has a long tradition but significant archaeological investigation has been very much confined to the likes of Canterbury, Chichester, Lewes and then the smaller Romano-British settlements at Staines, Westhawk Farm and Springhead (the last two no longer towns). Interpretations of urban evolution are very much based on:

- a general historical framework
- detailed documentary analysis
- reference to key type sites somewhere within England – or further afield
- interpretation of surviving urban topography
- somewhat limited archaeological intervention and sampling

A key example of this is our perception of the re-emergence of towns in the later Anglo-Saxon period. There are mints and coin distributions, we might interpret the street pattern at the centre of Lewes as planned and gridded (but how did the burhs work anyway?), we can have a guess at the size of towns from our interpretation of Domesday Book statistics, we may glimpse the occasional urban structure but we are creating models rather than necessarily demonstrating reality. This is not meant to belittle some substantial achievements but it does underline the necessity not to follow blindly an insecurely founded inductive approach to understanding what late Anglo-Saxon towns looked like and how they functioned. There is still a need for good basic data. There are similar issues with Romano-British towns but perhaps the situation is better for the medieval period, although, particularly with the smaller towns, there is a heavy reliance on documentary evidence and plan form-analysis, which, in any case, may be simplistic.

Research Agenda

Introduction

In considering the urban research agenda there is a need to go beyond the specific questions set out in relation to towns within the various period sections. What are the themes that have relevance more generally to the origins and development of urbanism within the South-East and transcend period boundaries? Again how do such themes have implications for how we approach the study of towns?

The Resource Assessment indicated that much good work has been undertaken in respect of the region's towns and that there are important ongoing studies. A major issue, however, is a lack of synthesis, whether in respect of placing an individual piece of work within its archaeological or historical framework or drawing together the relevant evidence from across the four counties to identify broader trends and perspectives. In this it is important to remember that, for certain periods in particular, hypotheses relating to the region's towns may rely heavily on research derived from investigations much further afield. There is thus a real need to develop a substantial and meaningful corpus of evidence that allows these externally derived models to be properly tested within the South-East. Methodologically the interdisciplinary nature of urban studies needs to be truly acknowledged and archaeologists, historians, geographers and others need to work closely together to ensure that our overall understanding is greater than the sum of individual sectoral thinking. With such approaches in mind it is important to consider what presently are the skills shortages for the study of towns in the region and indeed how local groups and individual researchers may contribute. Some specific areas for targeting in the investigation of towns are:

- the better integration of archaeological and documentary sources.
- the refinement of archaeological dating sequences so as to be able to develop local and regional chronologies in a more meaningful way.
- the investigation of standing buildings within historic towns, both for themselves and the light that they throw on social and economic issues.
- the establishment of regional type series, particularly for materials like pottery, so as to ensure common data standards for subsequent synthesis.
- the development of artefactual studies to provide meaningful insights into wider social and economic questions.
- the collection and analysis of environmental data so as to improve knowledge of urban environmental histories, economies and social profiles, including the provisioning of towns and aspects of the status, diet and health of their inhabitants.
- the utilisation of tight sampling strategies for environmental and other evidence so as to overcome problems of potential contamination caused by intercutting features and the 'recycling' of urban deposits.
- ensuring that, individually or collectively, investigations are of an appropriate size, scale and quality to answer the questions being posed. A key issue is to recognise when open area excavation and when sampling is appropriate?

Urban questions

Towns are such complex entities that inevitably the questions that can be asked of them appear never-ending. Indeed answering one question may give rise to a whole series of new questions. It is important, therefore, in framing these research agenda, not to dwell solely on specific fashionable theories of the moment but seek also to construct a foundation for questions that will inevitably emerge in the future. With that in mind four major themes have been identified below, all of which have a complex subset of period questions relating to them. They have, for the most part, been framed to cut across period boundaries although some specific period-related questions have been set out.

Urban trajectories

At its basic level there is the question as to why, how and where towns emerge, how they develop and in some cases why and how they fail. In the region there are periods of both growth and decline: the rise and fall of Roman towns, their re-emergence in Anglo-Saxon times and then the development of urbanism in the medieval and modern world. What happened in relation to individual towns and to them collectively in the region? What are the internal and external influences? What are the key impacts and how can they be put within a satisfactory chronological framework? For example what is the role of the Church, in relation to the Anglo-Saxon and medieval town and later what was the impact of the Dissolution on towns? Some specific questions are:

- What evidence is there for pre-Roman ‘proto-urbanism’?
- What were the origins of the major urban centres and how did they evolve?
- What were the origins of the minor urban centres and how did they evolve?
- How and when and why did towns cease to function as such? This is particularly a question at the end of the Roman period although individual towns emerge and fail throughout later history.
- How and why do urban hierarchies rise and fall? What were the drivers for such changes?
- What is the impact on urban development of the region’s long coast and the proximity of mainland Europe?
- What evidence do we have for emerging ports of trade in Middle Saxon times?
- What is the role of estate centres and minsters in the development of urban places?
- How do urban places emerge in the later Anglo-Saxon period? How urban are they really?
- What is the impact of the Norman conquest on the growth of towns? What did towns look like at the time of Domesday Book?
- What are the causes of urban growth and decay during the medieval period?
- How does the urban hierarchy evolve in the post-medieval period and how is it influenced by London’s growth?

- How do monastic sites, royal residences other high status sites interact with and influence the development of towns?

Urban forms

Towns come in a variety of sizes and forms, as do their constituent elements and structures. We need to understand better the physical nature of towns as such and their components – both what they looked like and the reasons for their appearance. How does form change through time and place and what are the reasons? Some specific questions are:

- How did urban forms evolve through the centuries? How can we effectively utilise plan-form analysis?
- What is the relationship between planned and organic growth, how valid are they as separate concepts and to what extent can they be distinguished in the physical remains of towns?
- How are the governmental, social, economic and religious functions of a town expressed in its overall form, its components and its structures? How does this change through time?
- What do urban topography and urban structures tell about individual towns?
- Can we see distinctive urban material cultures?

Urban political, economic and social dynamics

Towns are a reflection both of themselves and the world they inhabit. They very rarely survive in isolation but relate to broader political, economic and social influences. It is important, therefore, both to seek to understand a specific town and also to be able to identify and explain broader hierarchies so as to be able to see the relationship of an individual urban centre to its immediate and broader hinterland. What are the political, economic or social drivers? Are there specific influences on individual towns or groups of towns? How do urban systems change and why? Some specific questions are:

- How do towns relate to political territorial frameworks?
- How do towns reflect political and economic systems?
- How do towns relate to each other and to their hinterlands? Do towns have a separate distinctive role?
- How do towns contribute to Roman and indigenous social and economic interaction?
- Do Anglo-Saxon towns have a distinctive economic and social role, separate from the countryside?
- How does the early post-Norman conquest town function and how does its role evolve in relation to changing economic and political factors?
- What is the impact of the proximity of London, from Roman through to post-medieval times?

Urban identities

To what extent are urban forms, layouts and their buildings purely functional? Do they rather express deeper individual or collective aspirations or derive from social, political or religious memory or other conscious or subconscious designs? To what extent are the various aspects of human identity reflected in urban morphology and history?

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to a number of people for providing information and references and for commenting on earlier drafts of this paper, in particular Paul Bennett, Martin Biddle, Helen Clarke, Joe Flatman, Roland Harris, Casper Johnson, James Kenny, Dominique de Moulins, Sarah Pearson, Rob Poulton and Mark Taylor.

Bibliography

Major sources for the towns of the South-East region are the ***Extensive Urban Surveys*** sponsored by English Heritage. Those for Kent and Surrey can be accessed on the Archaeology Data Service website at https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/EUS/. For East and West Sussex they can be accessed via the respective Historic Environment Records (HERs): for East Sussex at: https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/archaeology/her/; and for West Sussex at https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/landscape-and-environment/historic-town-characterisation/.

All Conservation Areas are required to have a publicly accessible ***Conservation Area Assessment*** prepared by the relevant District or Unitary authority. Coverage is, however, presently incomplete.

Aldsworth, F and Freke, D 1976. *Historic Towns in Sussex. An Archaeological Survey.* London.

Andrews, P 2004. Saxon royal estate centre to post-medieval market town: the contribution of archaeology to understanding towns in Surrey. In J Cotton, G Crocker A and Graham (eds) 2004 *Aspects of Archaeology and History in Surrey – Towards a Research Framework for the County*. Guildford.169-85.

Andrews, P, Biddulph, E, Hardy, A and Brown, R 2011. *Settling the Ebbsfleet Valley, High Speed 1 Excavations at Springhead and Northfleet, Kent. The Late Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, and Medieval Landscape. Volume 1: The Sites.* Oxford and Salisbury.

Ballard, A 1913. *British Borough Charters 1042-1216*. Cambridge.

Ballard, A and Tait J 1923. *British Borough Charters 1216-1307*. Cambridge.

Barley, M W (ed.) 1976. *The Plans and Topography of Medieval Towns in England and Wales.* CBA Research Report 14.

Barnett, C, Mckinley, J I, Stafford, E, Grimm, J M and Stevens, C J 2011. *Settling the Ebbsfleet Valley, High Speed 1 Excavations at Springhead and Northfleet, Kent. The Late Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, and Medieval Landscape. Volume 3: Late Iron Age to Roman Human Remains and Environmental Reports.*Oxford and Salisbury.

Berry, S 2005. *Georgian Brighton*. Chichester.

Biddle, M 1976. Towns. In D M Wilson (ed.) *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*. London. 99-150.

Biddulph, E, Seager Smith, R and Schuster, J 2011. *Settling the Ebbsfleet Valley, High Speed 1 Excavations at Springhead and Northfleet, Kent. The Late Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, and Medieval Landscape. Volume 2: Late Iron Age to Roman Finds Reports.*Oxford and Salisbury.

Bird, D 2004. *Roman Surrey*. Stroud.

Blair, J 2005. *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*. Oxford.

Blair, J 2018 *Building Anglo-Saxon England.* Princeton and Oxford.

Blockley, K, Blockley, M, Blockley, P, Frere, S S and Stow, S 1995. *Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park and Surrounding Areas*. The Archaeology of Canterbury Monograph Series 5, Canterbury Archaeological Trust. Canterbury.

Booth, P, Bingham A and Lawrence, S 2008. *The Roman Roadside Settlement at Westhawk Farm, Ashford, Kent: Excavations 1998-9*. Oxford Archaeology Monograph. Oxford.

Brent, C 1993. *Georgian Lewes 1714-1830.* Lewes.

Brent, C 2004. *Pre-Georgian Lewes c.890-1714: The Emergence of a County Town*. Lewes.

Brooks, N 1984. *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, Leicester.

Burnham, B C 1990. *The Small Towns of Roman Britain*, London.

Campbell, E M J 1962. Kent. In H C Darby and E M J Campbell (eds) *The Domesday Geography of South-East England*. Cambridge. 483-562.

Carder, T 1990. *The Encyclopaedia of Brighton.* Lewes.

Carver, M 1993. *Arguments in Stone*. Oxford.

Champion T 2007. The growth of archaeology in Kent. In J H Williams *The Archaeology of Kent to AD 800*. Woodbridge. 7-22.

Clarke, H, Pearson, S, Mate, M, and Parfitt, P 2010. *Sandwich, the 'completest medieval town in England'. A study of the town and port from its origins to 1600.* Oxford and Oakville.

Clark K 2001. The role of understanding in building conservation. In Pearson, S and Meeson, B (eds) *Vernacular Buildings in a Changing World: Understanding, Recording and conservation*. CBA Research Report 126. York. 41-52.

Clark, P 2000. *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, volume 2, 1540-1840*. Cambridge. 2000.

Clark, P and Murfin, L 1995. *The History of Maidstone*. Stroud.

Daunton, M 2001. *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, volume 3, 1840-1950*. Cambridge.

Draper, G 2009. *Rye, A History of a Sussex Cinque Port to 1660*. Chichester.

Drewett, P 1992. Excavations at Lewes Castle 1985-1988. *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **130**, 69-106.

Driver, J 1990. Animal Bones, in Driver, J C, Rady, J and Soarks, M (eds) *Excavations in the Cathedral Precinct, 2 Linacre Garden, 'Master Omers' and St Gabriels Chapel.* Maidstone. 228-57.

Dyer, A 2000. Ranking lists of English medieval towns. In D M Palliser (ed) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, volume 1, 600-1540*. Cambridge. 747-70.

Dyer, C 2003. The archaeology of medieval small towns. *Medieval Archaeology* 47, 85-114.

Frere, S S and Stow, S 1983. *Excavations in the St George's Street and Burgate Street Areas.* The Archaeology of Canterbury Monograph Series 7, Canterbury Archaeological Trust. Canterbury.

Frere, S S, Bennett, P, Rady, J and Stow, S 1987. *Intra- and Extra-Mural Sites 1949-1055 and 1980-1984*. The Archaeology of Canterbury Monograph Series 8, Canterbury Archaeological Trust. Canterbury.

Gardiner, M 1997. 'Trade, rural industry and the origins of villages: some evidence from South-East England'. In G de Boe and F Verhaeghe (eds), 1997. *Rural Settlements in Medieval Europe: Papers of the Medieval Europe Brugge 1997 Conference*, 63-73.

Gardiner, M, Russell, M and Gregory D 1996. Excavations at Lewes Friary 1985-6 and 1988-9. *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **134**, 71-123.

Gardiner, M and Greatorex, C 1997. Archaeological excavations in Steyning, 1992-95: further evidence for the evolution of a Late Saxon small town. *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **135**, 143-71.

Harris, R B 2005. Lewes, Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS).

Hasted, E 1778-1799. *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Containing the Antient and Present State of it, Civil and Ecclesiastical*. Canterbury.

Heighway, C (ed) 1972 *The Erosion of History*. [London].

Hicks, A 2015 *Medieval Town and Augustinian Friary: Settlement c 1325-1700: Canterbury Whitefriars Excavations 1999-2004.* The Archaeology of Canterbury (New Series) vol 7. Canterbury.

Hicks, A and Houliston, M 2018 *Within the Walls: the Developing Town c.AD 750-1225: Canterbury Whitefriars excavations 1999-2004.* The Archaeology of Canterbury (New Series) vol 8. Canterbury

Hicks, M and Hicks A 2001. *St Gregory's Priory, Northgate, Canterbury Excavations 1988-1991*. The Archaeology of Canterbury (New Series) vol 2. Canterbury

Hill, D 1978. The origins of Saxon towns. In P Brandon (ed) *The South Saxons*. London.

Holmes, M 2011. Food, Status and Complexity in Saxon and Scandinavian England: an archaeozoological approach. University of Leicester PhD thesis.

Jones, P and Poulton, R 2010. Staines : The archaeology of the High Street island. In P Jones and Poulton R *Roman and Medieval Staines, The Development of the Town*, 1-52.

Keene, D 2000. The South-East of England. In D M Palliser (ed.) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, volume 1, 600-1540*. Cambridge. 545-82.

Kent County Council 2005 'Rochester – Kent Archaeological Assessment Document'. Kent Extensive Urban Survey (EUS.)

King, A 1982. The animal bones in P Bennet and S Stow (eds) *Excavations at Canterbury Castle.* Maidstone. 193-205.

King, S H 1962. Sussex. In H C Darby and E M J Campbell (eds) *The Domesday Geography of South-East England*. Cambridge. 407-82.

Lloyd, C W 1962. Surrey. In H C Darby and E M J Campbell (eds) *The Domesday Geography of South-East England*. Cambridge. 364-406.

Lyne, M 1997. *Lewes Priory: Excavations by Richard Lewis 1969-82.* Lewes.

Mckinley, J 2004. Welcome to *Pontibus* … gateway to the West. *Surrey Archaeological Collections* **91**, 1-69.

Maitland, F W 1898. *Township and Borough*. Cambridge.

Manley, J (ed) 2008. *The Archaeology of Fishbourne and Chichester, A Framework for its Future*. Lewes.

Martin, D and Martin, B 2004. *New Winchelsea, Sussex: A Medieval Port Town*, Field Archaeology Unit Monograph no 2, Institute of Archaeology, University College London. Kings Lynn.

Martin, D and Martin, B with Clubb, J and Draper G 2009. *Rye Rebuilt: Regeneration and Decline within a Sussex Cinque Port, 1350-1660*. Burgess Hill.

Mate, M E 2006. *Trade and Economic Developments 1450-1550: The Experience of Kent, Surrey and Sussex*. Woodbridge.

Meeson, B 2001. Recording for research and conservation. In S Pearson and B Meeson *Vernacular Buildings in a Changing World: Understanding, Recording and conservation*, CBA Research Report 126. 27-37. York.

Metcalf, D M 1995. The monetary economy of ninth-century England south of the Humber: a topographical analysis. In A S Blackburn and D N Dumville (eds) *Kings, Currency and Alliances: History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century*. Woodbridge.167-97.

Millett, M and Wilmott, A 2003. Rethinking Richborough. In P Wilson (ed.) *The Archaeology of Roman Towns: Studies in Honour of J S Wacher*. Oxford. 184-94.

O'Connell, M 1977. *Historic Towns in Surrey*, Surrey Archaeological Society Research Volume 5. Guildford.

O'Connor, T 1979. Animal bone remains. In D J Freke Excavations in Tanyard Lane, Steyning, 1997, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **117**, 135-150.
Palliser, D M (ed.) 2000 *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, volume 1, 600-1540*. Cambridge.
Parfitt, K, Corke B and Cotter J 2006 *Townwall Street, Dover, Excavations 1996* The Archaeology of Canterbury (New Series) vol 3. Canterbury.
Parfitt, K and Armour, P 2016 St James's, Dover *Friends of the Canterbury Archaeoloogical Trust Newsletter* **100**, 12-17.
Pilbrow, J 1871. Discoveries made during excavations at Canterbury in 1868. *Archaeologia* **43**, 154-64.
Poole, K 2011. The Nature of society in England, *c*. 410-1066. University of Nottingham PhD thesis.
Poulton, R 1987. Saxon Surrey. In J Bird and D Bird (eds). *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*. Guildford. 197-222.
Poulton, R 2005. *A Medieval Royal Complex at Guildford: Excavations at the Castle and Palace*. Guildford.
Poulton, R and Wood, 1984. *Excavations on the Site of the Dominican Friary at Guildford in 1974 and 1978*. Surrey Archaeological Collections Research Volume no 9.
Reynolds, S 1977. *An Introduction to the History of the English Medieval Town*, Oxford.
Schofield, J 2004. What did London do for us? London and towns in its region, 1450-1700. In J Cotton, G Crocker A and Graham (eds) 2004 *Aspects of Archaeology and History in Surrey – Towards a Research Framework for the County*. Guildford.187-198.
Somner, W 1640. *Antiquities of Canterbury, or a Survey of that Ancient Citie, with the Suburbs and Cathedrall, etc.*. London.
Speed, J 1610/11. *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain*. London.
Sweet, R 1996. The production of urban histories in eighteenth-century England. *Urban History* **23** pt 2, 171-188.
Swift, D 2009 A post-excavation assessment and updated project design report on archaeological excavations at the Lewes Residential and Walwers Lane sites, Lewes, East Sussex. Unpublished Archaeology South-East Report No 2009080.
Sykes, N, Ingrem, C and Ayres, K, 2005. The bones and shell in Poulton 2005.
Tait, J 1936. *The English Medieval Borough*. Manchester.
Tatton-Brown, T 1984. The towns of Kent. In J Haslam ed.) *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*. Chichester. 1-36.
Urry, W 1967. *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*. London.
Whitelock, D (ed.) 1955. *English Historical Documents c. 500-1042*. London.
Williams, J H 2003. New light on Roman Kent. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* **16**, 219-36.