

Chapter 3

Chaldon Origins

by the late Peter Gray

The first mention of Chaldon is in about AD 727. This reference is in a cartulary of Chertsey Abbey written apparently in the 13th century¹ and purporting to list the early property of the Abbey. The actual document itself is thought to be a forgery but internal evidence suggests that it is based on early originals². The name means, according to *The Place Names of Surrey*, 'calves down' i.e. the place where calves are pastured. There is also information on customs and associations with other areas in documents which, although of medieval and later date, is clearly of pre-Conquest origin e.g. the manor of Chaldon was a sub-manor of Banstead and shared with Banstead payment for castle guard at Rochester³. Parishes too have early origins, the boundaries of which on modern maps can often be traced back via the large scale Ordnance Survey maps of the 19th century to documents recording the extent of Saxon estates.

These details raise a number of intriguing questions. Why was the pasturing of calves on the downs at Chaldon sufficiently distinctive to make it a unique place-name locally when other downland nearby must surely have been just as good for the pasturing of calves? How did Chaldon come to be associated with Banstead which was well away across the valley with Chipstead in between, and, what is most odd, how on earth could the connection to Rochester Castle have come about since that was certainly not in Surrey?

To make any sense of these clues to the origins of Chaldon in the Saxon period something of the settlement of this part of south-east England generally and of its administrative framework as it is currently thought to have been must be understood. Only then can something of the later development of the parish and its influence on the Chaldon of today be understood.

Background to local Saxon settlement

The background to Saxon settlement in this part of Surrey has been the subject of recent work, principally by John Blair, and published in his book *Early Medieval Surrey*⁴. It is against these ideas which were explained on a county wide basis that we will try to fit in the details of early Chaldon as they are found.

The Saxon settlement of the county largely took place in the 6th and 7th centuries⁵. The initial settlement appears to have been a series of federations sharing a common *folc* custom regulating inheritance and social law. These federations were large units, typically of the order of 100 square miles and roughly equivalent in extent to the lathes of Kent or the rapes of Sussex. The people within such units (and the populations were obviously quite small at that time) shared common pastures on the Downs (such as the downs at Banstead and Coulsdon) and in due course in the Weald. A feature of these early regions was that they were usually centred on a Royal vill⁶.

This initial arrangement was followed in the 7th century by a period of dismembering of large units into estates of *bocland*, i.e. land held by *boc* or charter, rather than by custom as had hitherto been the case. *Bocland* had the advantage that it had royal or ecclesiastic protection rather than just custom⁷. There is evidence of further fragmentation taking place in the years right up to the coming of the Normans.

In Kent, where the early sources are particularly rich, it has been noted that the westernmost lathe (Westerham) was abnormally small giving rise to the suggestion that the Kentish systems originally extended into east Surrey⁸. It is known that the border between Kent and Surrey fluctuated in the early years of the Saxon settlement and that it was not until about AD 700, when the present boundary, marked by a bank which can be seen near *The Grasshopper Inn*, Limsfield on the A25, was fixed⁹. The exact position of the furthest

A HISTORY OF CHALDON

westward extent of Kent has not been identified but it was possibly to a line which ran through Reigate and included the royal vill of Wallington. This strip of east Surrey when combined with the later Westerham lathe was however large enough for two lathes.

The Surrey side of the AD 700 border was apparently divided into two 'primary' territories shown on map A. There was probably an archiepiscopal estate centred on Croydon and stretching to the Sussex border and another to the west probably centred on the royal vill of Wallington. The Croydon estate at least seems to have been broken up about AD 870-900¹⁰.

These estates or primary territories were subdivided for administrative purposes into units called 'hundreds', probably in the tenth century¹¹ (map B). By Domesday, 1086, the various manors in south-east Surrey were arranged in the hundreds with Reigate and Tandridge stretching into the Weald and Wallington, largely on the Downs. Hundred boundaries are usually mapped in parochial terms¹² but since originally at least they related to the manors (and the later formal parishes were by no means always coterminous with manors) the original hundred boundaries have not been worked out in any detail. Certainly the boundaries of the earlier primary estates have yet to be defined¹³. The odd protuberance of Chaldon at the southern part of Wallington hundred needs to be noted in this connection.

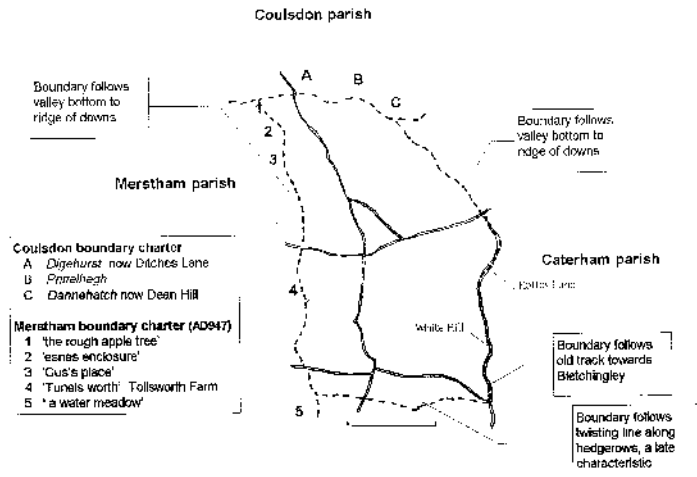
This sets the picture then against which to interpret the manorial and other evidence of Saxon Chaldon.

Boundaries of the historic Chaldon parish

How then does the historic parish of Chaldon fit into all this? (In talking about the historic parish we must remember that as a parish in the sense that we normally think of it, i.e. related to a church, it did not take such a form until at least 1200¹⁴).

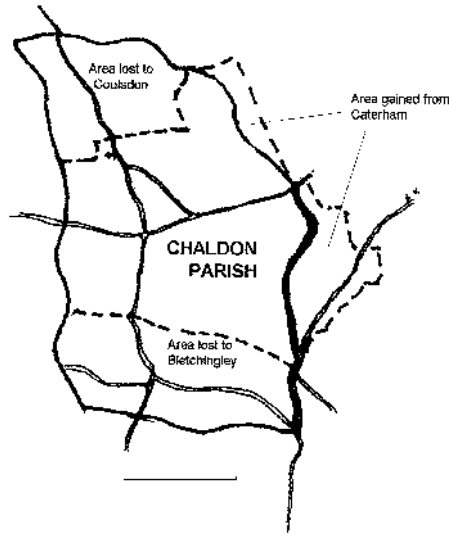
Examination of the nature of the boundaries of the historic parish gives much information of their likely origins. The earliest boundaries, those which date to a time when settlement and associated enclosure was almost non-existent, are those that follow natural features such as valley bottoms, streams or other readily recognisable features. They occasionally include demonstrably early trackways and Roman roads. Boundaries which zigzag along hedgerows (rather than following a long sinuous line) are inevitably late; implicitly they must mark the alteration or subdivision of an early estate when man-made objects such as hedgerows had been set out.

The boundaries of the historic parish of Chaldon show (map C) a number of distinct characteristics. Starting in the south-eastern corner the eastern boundary follows the line of an old track up White Hill before continuing along Roffes Lane which runs in a valley bottom almost as far as the north-eastern corner. The northern



Map C: The bounds of the historic parish of Chaldon related to natural features and the AD 947 Merstham and medieval Coulsdon boundary charters. The fact that most of the boundary follows natural features indicates early origins for the underlying settlements.

CHALDON ORIGINS



Map D Chaldon parish. Only the western boundary of the modern parish coincides with the historic parish (Marked with solid lines). The pecked lines indicate modern changes showing losses to north and south and gains to the east.

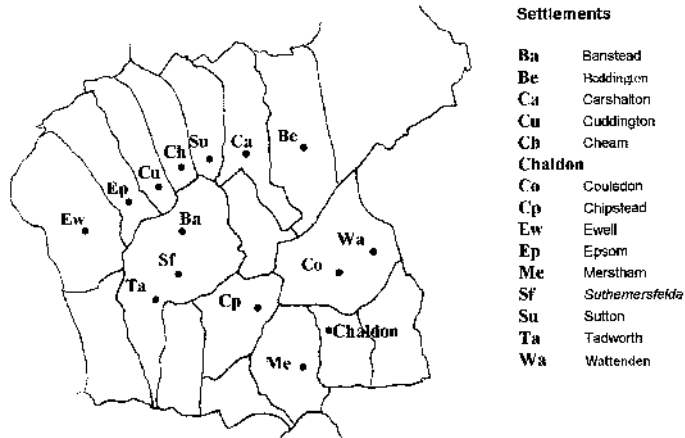
line is part trackway part field boundary and is delineated in a post-Conquest charter of medieval Coulsdon (See map C). The western boundary follows natural features, a valley bottom to the top of the downs before making direct to a stream to the south. This western boundary coincides with part of the boundary in a charter of Merstham dated 947. All these characteristics indicate early origins. The southern boundary is quite different in character, following around hedgerows in a manner strongly suggestive of subdivision of a larger unit. The implications of this are mentioned below when discussing the origins of the manors.

The extent of the parish in the 19th century, the first time that there are large scale maps with boundaries shown, is indicated on map D. Since that date there have been a number of changes, mainly reducing its size. A large chunk has been lost to Coulsdon in the north west corner whilst the area south of the crest of the downs has been lost to Bletchingley.

Changes to the eastern side associated with the edges of modern housing estates occurred when the anticipated new civil parish was formed in 2000.

First Saxon references

The charter of AD 727 is an alleged grant to Chertsey Abbey of 15 settlements in the Banstead/Coulsdon district. They were Sutton, Carshalton, Beddington, Waddington (in Coulsdon), Coulsdon, Merstham, Chipstead with Chaldon, Banstead with *Suthemersfelda*, Tadworth, Epsom, Ewell with Cuddington, and Cheam¹⁵. It is thought that when the charters were written this block of estates still retained the memory



Map E: Chaldon and associated settlements which may have formed the Saxon estate claimed by Chertsey Abbey in the early 8th century. The charter of 727 which includes the first mention of these settlements is considered to be a forgery but seems to contain a folk memory of an actual early estate. The parish boundaries date from about the 12th century and may or may not coincide with the original manorial boundaries.

A HISTORY OF CHALDON

of having once belonged to a unit of *folcland*. Since such groups would be subject to the same custom and authority of its neighbour and take its share of the rewards of the whole community it has been suggested that each habitation might be expected to be especially associated with a particular industry or service or alternatively to some tribute obligation¹⁶. This might explain the proximity in the district of Chaldon (calf down), Gatton (goat farm), Merstham (ham at the horse enclosure), Banstead (place where beans are cultivated), Chipstead (place where a market existed).

This accounts for the Saxon origins of the western part of Chaldon parish but not the eastern part, the part east of the ancient trackway marked by Hilltop Lane/Church Lane/Ditches Lane and across Farthing Down, occupied by Willey manor.

Willey is not mentioned in Domesday but was included implicitly under the Limpsfield entry. This is discussed below.

Chaldon at Domesday

Medieval documents show that Chaldon parish was formed largely out of two Domesday manors, Chaldon a sub-manor of Banstead, and Willey, a sub-manor of Limpsfield. The boundary between these two sub-manors can be deduced from later manorial records and ran south along the track running due south from Farthing Down. (see map F).

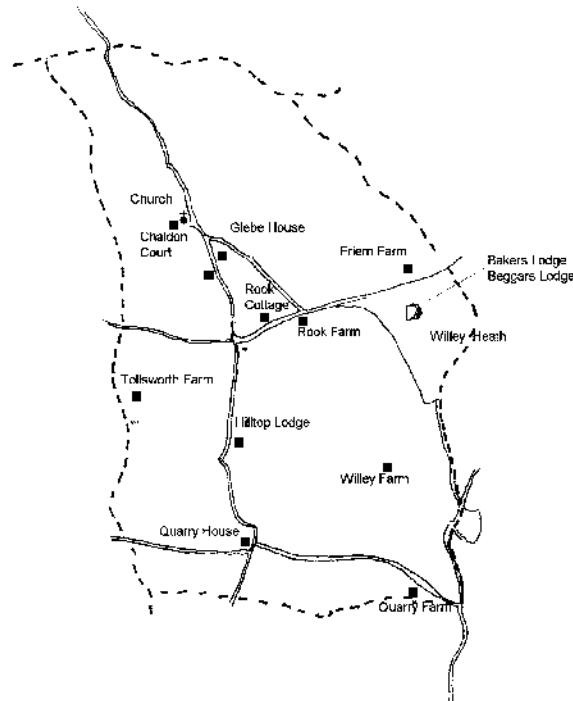
Chaldon is mentioned in Domesday book—

*Ralph also holds Chaldon from the Bishop (of Bayeux). Dering held it from King Edward. Then and now it answered for 2 hides. Land for 2 ploughs; they are in lordship. A church.*¹⁷

The ‘also holds’ is a reference to Ralph holding two unidentified hides¹⁸ in Banstead in the previous entry. It is the first documentary association of Chaldon with Banstead. There is no mention of villagers or cottagers or slaves but there is mention of a church.

The Chaldon referred to here is not the historic parish but the manor of Chaldon occupying the western part of the historic parish as explained later.

The extent of the medieval manor of Chaldon, which equated no doubt to the Domesday estate, is fairly obviously defined to the north by a medieval Coulsdon charter, to the west, by the AD



Map F: Chaldon with identified sites of houses and cottages mentioned in Hearth Tax and manorial records

CHALDON ORIGINS

947 Merstham charter bounds and to the east by Willey manor. The south however is more difficult. As has been pointed out above, the southern parish boundary has all the hallmarks of a secondary line (i.e. following hedgerows) and so does not seem likely to be the boundary of the Saxon manor. However the boundaries of the adjoining parishes of Merstham and Gatton, each of which were, it is assumed, coterminous with Chaldon shows that each went as far as the stream on the southern edge. That stream continues just south of Chaldon. Given the importance of water and meadow in the medieval farming economy it seems highly likely that the Chaldon manorial boundary also extended to the stream. In support of this there are some documentary references in the charters of St Thomas's Hospital to '*in the marsh*', and '*2½ acres of land in meadow and marsh*'¹⁹. Tollsworth, part of Chaldon manor, includes a grant by Henry VIII of '*.... part of the tithes of a mill...*' (*Victoria County History* iv: 190) which would have had to have been on this stream if it was indeed sited within the manor boundaries. [Later research by Mary Saaler has shown that Tollsworth Water Mill records have been confused with Tolworth near Kingston-on-Thames. When researching at the PRO for Edward II references she noted that Tolworth /Tollsworth have been confused in the index]

Willey is not mentioned as such in Domesday Book but later evidence from court rolls shows that it was included as part of the entry for Limpsfield. Of particular significance is that it appears that Willey included one of the two quarries mentioned in Domesday book under the Limpsfield entry²⁰. The correlation of the eastern and western boundaries with those projected for Pendell manor, now in Bletchingley parish, suggests that Pendell and Willey may have been part of a combined estate which was split before the Conquest²¹.

Medieval and later manors and holdings – Chaldon

The early references to Chaldon are all in connection with Banstead manor. Manning and Bray (ii 441) record that the manor was held by Sir Richard de Covert in the early 12th century and there are further references to the de Coverts holding it in the 13th century. In 1298 Roger de Covert died seised of Chaldon which included *a capital mansion, 160 acres of arable, 6 acres of meadow...and various rents etc...* out of which was paid for castle guard for Rochester 24s. 0d. His heir John was then 12²². In the 1325 Extent of the manor of Banstead 'Sir John Covert holds at Chalvedone one knights fee and owes rent of 6s. 0d and suit of court' (Lambert, II,10). The scale of their interest in Chaldon in the 14th century at least can be seen in the remains of their house, 'Chaldon Court'.

It is not known for sure when the house was built but structural details and style suggest an early 14th century date during the period when the manor was held by Sir John de Covert. There is some contradiction in the published facts about his life²³ which needs research using the original documents to resolve. However there seems little doubt that Sir John had the wealth and position to have had such an exceptional house. (See below for a description of the house). He married, it is generally agreed, first, Isabella, daughter and heiress of Sir John Camoys. The Camoys family seem to have been rich and powerful; its memorials can be seen in Trotton church in West Sussex. Secondly he married Margaret Dalingridge of another rich and important family²⁴ who were to build Bodiam Castle later in the 14th century. In 1340 Sir John de Covert became one of four Sussex commissioners appointed to collect and sell the tax of 'the ninths'. He appears thus to have been a man at least at the very top of 'county society' and to have had close connections with other rich and powerful families.

His line seems to have died out with his son and the property passed to another branch of the family whose main interests were in Sussex. The de Coverts sold their Chaldon property in 1476²⁵.

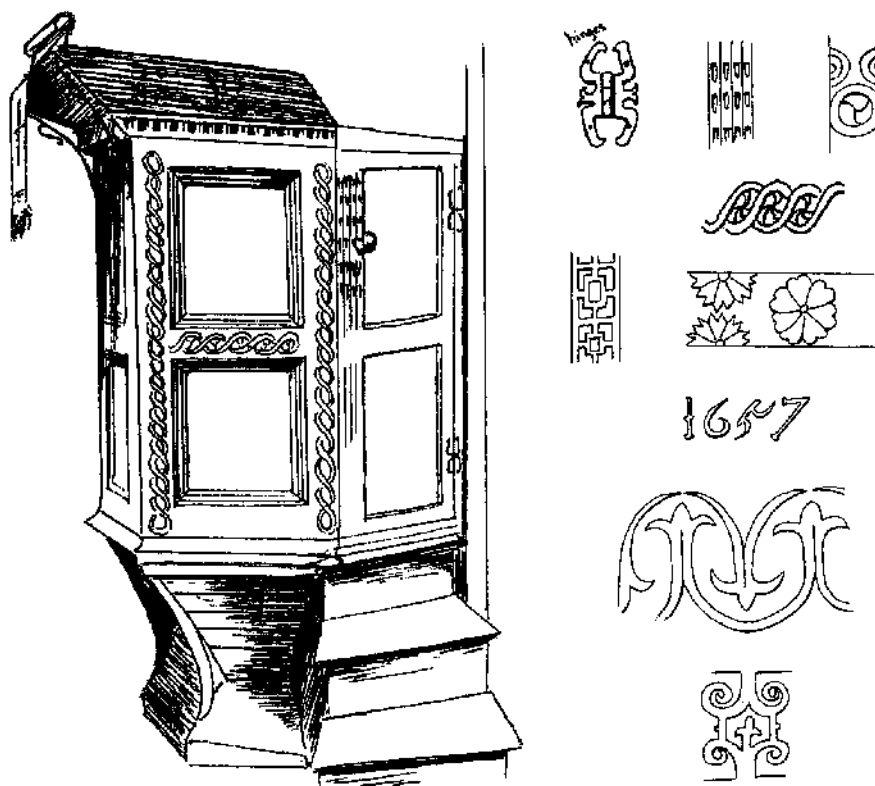
In 1580 when Chaldon manor was purchased by John Southcote, Justice of the Queens Bench, it was described as held of the honour of Rochester Castle²⁶. The origin of this Rochester connection is not known but it seems possible that it goes back in some way to the earliest stage of the Saxon settlement of Kent when this area was part of that kingdom²⁷.

A HISTORY OF CHALDON

The holding passed through several owners until 1724, when it was bought by Paul Docminique along with Tollsworth and subsequently by William Jolliffe in 1784²⁸. In these instances at least it is clearly a part, probably a quite minor part, of a much larger estate.

Tollsworth

Little work has been done on the medieval history of Tollsworth although a cartulary of the lands of Merton Priory which held Tollsworth exists in the British Library²⁹. In the 12th century Peter de Tolworth gave a virgate of land at Tollsworth to Gilbert de Curton. The land had been servile but Peter freed it³⁰. Later, about 1200, Peter de Talewrth, presumably a son of the above, granted all his land in Tholeswrth to Merton Priory³¹. The *Victoria County History* gives another version of the grant to Merton saying that in about 1200 William Hansard granted certain lands in Tullsworth to Walter Prior of Merton.... *next the grange*³². This is not



The oak pulpit in the church carries the name Patience Lambert (of Tollsworth) and the date 1657, which makes it one of the very few pulpits from Cromwellian times in existence.

CHALDON ORIGINS

understood although the reference to the grange is interesting and may refer in some way to the earthworks to the south of the present house. Merton still held the land at the time of the Dissolution in 1538.

After the Dissolution Tollsworth had various owners, some of whom such as the Lamberts who gave a pulpit to the church in 1657 probably lived in the house. In 1724 however ownership and occupation doubtless became separated because it was bought, along with 'Chaldon Court', by Paul Docminique, MP for the rotten borough of Gatton, to add to his Merstham estate³³. With this purchase the major parts of Chaldon manor were brought under the same ownership for the first time for 500 years.

The land associated with both 'Chaldon Court' and 'Tollsworth Farm' on the 19th century tithe maps extends across into Merstham parish terminating on another perhaps more obvious natural boundary line which included the unenclosed waste of Alderstead Heath. Whilst this arrangement may just be a result of both being part of the Merstham estate of the Docminiques and later the Jolliffes, field hedgerows which pay little attention to the ancient Chaldon/Merstham parish boundary suggest that the farm tithe boundaries *just may* relate to the original Saxon Chaldon estate and that for some reason the AD 947 boundary charter was imposed regardless of the extent of the then current holding. Rumble makes reference to Tollsworth in this respect when discussing early habitation sites straddling later *bochland* estates³⁴.

Willey

The first documentary reference to the manor of Willey is on the death of John de Warbleton in the 13th century³⁵. He held the land of the Abbot of Battle for 50s. 0d rent and suit of his court at Limpsfield. It consisted of a capital messuage, 100 acres of arable, 10 of pasture and various tenants. The de Warbletons seem to have continued to hold it until the Dissolution. The demesne of the manor centred on 'Willey Farm'. A series of court rolls starting in 1494³⁶ enables the extent of the manor to be ascertained and provides some early references to modern farms and houses.

The most interesting holding concerns 'Fryern Farm'. A 13th century reference in the St Thomas cartulary where 'Elicia de Chalvedon, for the good of her soul and that of Ralph de Bristowe, her late husband and of her father and mother, gave to the hospital, all her land in Chalvedon which she held of the Warbletons. Later, about 1235, the hospital agreed to provide Alice with a chamber within the court of the said hospital, to dwell there during her life, with reasonable necessities as if for two sisters of the same house and her servant, as if for one of the servants of the same house and a further 5s.6d for clothing and fuel to be paid yearly³⁷. Clearly an early pension provision!

Willey was held by a number of fairly substantial families after the Dissolution, some of whom probably lived in the farmhouse. It was acquired by Sir William Clayton in 1734 when it became part of a large estate which included lands in Bletchingley, Godstone and other adjoining parishes.

Combe

Combe is sometimes referred to in the same breath as the other manors e.g. in 1549 'Quarry farm, a messuage, a garden, 3 barns, 60 acres of land 10 meadow, 20 wood, 60 heath and furze... in Combe, Blechingley and Chaldon'³⁸. Clearly it was a place of some local importance. By tracing through the holdings and the rent³⁹ it is clear that Profets and Quarry refer to basically the same holding with the name Combe sometimes being used for the farm but sometimes for a somewhat wider area apparently at the foot of the downs. In the 1705 Willey rolls it is 'The Quarry called Combe'.

The reason for its importance goes back to its value as a quarry not only for its mention in Domesday (see above) but also for its use for royal buildings. In 1342/3 John and Thomas Prophete are authorised to dig for stone for use in Windsor Castle in quarries of Merstham, and Chalvedon⁴⁰. There are frequent references to the Prophete family locally in the medieval period.

A HISTORY OF CHALDON

Hundred and early estate boundaries

Finally what is the effect of the identification of the boundaries of the manors of Chaldon and Willey on the identification of the various Saxon administrative divisions?

Chaldon manor is noted in Domesday as being in Wallington hundred, (see map B) an odd southern projection from the simple outline to be expected of most early boundaries. Saxon hundred boundaries clearly were fairly complex just here but where exactly? There is no obvious relationship of this arrangement with earlier known groupings and it is particularly odd that Chaldon is in a different hundred from Chipstead and Merstham, with both of which it was associated in earliest times.

However it does appear that it might be in some way related to the boundary between the archbishop's Croydon estate and the contemporary Wallington one (map A). Blair noted that the association of boundaries with the 14 deliberately aligned barrows of late 6th or early 7th century date across Farthing Down was often considered to be a sign of an early Saxon territorial boundary⁴¹. Without any knowledge of the Chaldon/Willey boundary and their association with manors to west and east he did not think that it was right to surmise a major boundary here. However these barrows are next to Ditches Lane, itself a continuation of the Hilltop Lane/Church Lane line which marks the boundary between Chaldon manor and Willey manor. This is a line which would seem to coincide with the western boundary of Tandridge hundred. It had the characteristics of an early line being reasonably straight and following either old trackways or natural features. Arguably also it is part of a line with similar characteristics which formed the western boundary of Tandridge hundred itself⁴². Such a line could well also be the boundary of the early archbishop's Croydon estate. (see maps A and B)

Sources

BLAIR, J (1991) *Early Medieval Surrey*

BIRD, J & D G (1987) *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*

GOVER, MAWER, STENTON (1934 reprinted 1969) *The Place Names of Surrey*

GRAY, P (1991) *Blechingley Village and Parish*

LAMBERT, U (1921) *Blechingley: a parish history*

MANNING & BRAY *The history and antiquities of the county of Surrey*

MORRIS, John (1975) *Domesday Book, 3 Surrey*

PERCY, K (1979) Limpsfield: interpretation of the Domesday Book entry, *SyASBull.* 156

POULTON, Rob (1987) Saxon Surrey in Bird, *The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540*

RUMBLE, Alexander R (1976) *Place names and their context with special regard to the Croydon survey region*

RUMBLE, A R (1970/71) *The Merstham (Surrey) Charter bounds AD 947*

(Journal of the English Place-Name Society 3) 1970/71, *The medieval boundary of Coulsdon (Surrey)*

(Journal of the English Place Name Society 4) (1971/72)

VCH (1902-12) *Victoria County History of Surrey*

WITNEY, K P (1976) *The Jutish forest*

WITNEY, K P (1982) *The Kingdom of Kent*

CHALDON ORIGINS

References

- 1 Rumble 1976, p.174.
- 2 The date of the Chertsey charter of 675 given in the English Place Name Society volume on Surrey (1934) is now considered to be too early. It is now thought to date to 727 (ref Rumble 1976, p.174).
- 3 Evidence of the earlier extent of the Kentish kingdom into what is now east Surrey is hinted at in various ways. The Kentish custom of Borough English, the right of the youngest son to inherit, is to be found in several manors in east Surrey. There are several manors (Wallington, Titsey, Lingfield and Limpsfield) which had outliers on the Kent side of the present county border.
- 4 Another important paper dealing with the area is Alexander Rumble's paper on place names of the Croydon region given to the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society in 1976.
- 5 Poulton, p.216.
- 6 Blair p.12.
- 7 Rumble 1976, p.173.
- 8 Blair p.17.
- 9 Witney 1982, pp.141-180.
- 10 Blair p.25. Sanderstead and parts of what were to become Limpsfield and Lingfield parishes became part of the Hyde Abbey (Winchester) estate at about this date.
- 11 See Richardson, John, *The Local Historian's Encyclopaedia*. 1974.
- 12 See Morris, 1975.
- 13 Blair, Chapter 6.
- 14 Blair p.33. Noted in particular the stability of boundaries.
- 15 By Domesday only Waddington, Coulsdon, Sutton, Epsom and Chipstead were held by Chertsey. Rumble 1976, p.175.
- 16 Blair p.30.
- 17 See Morris.
- 18 Hide = originally the amount of land which could be ploughed in a year using one plough and support a family. Domesday hides were fiscal.
- 19 St Thomas's Hospital (Stowe MS 942), 'in the marsh of Cherlton' 834, and 'in vill of Chaldwell, of 2½ acres of land in meadow and marsh' 829. The context of these entries suggests that it can only be Chaldon which is meant.
- 20 Percy, K (1979) Limpsfield: interpretation of the Domesday Book entry, *SyASBull*, **156**.
- 21 Gray, P, 7, see also page 18 above (Boundaries of the historic Chaldon parish).
- 22 Manning & Bray ii p.441.
- 23 See *VCH, M&B, Sussex Archaeological Collections* 46, in particular 172-176.
- 24 The article in the *Sussex Archaeological Collections* says that Margaret was daughter of Sir Richard Cheslebeche of Chaldon (sic) but this is not a name which is known in connection with the Surrey Chaldon at least. Certainly there are no possible holdings in the parish with which he might have been associated. It seems more likely that the reference is to Chaldon Herring near Chesil Beach in Dorset.
- 25 Manning & Bray ii, p.441
- 26 Lambert, II, 10.

A HISTORY OF CHALDON

- 27 Much of the history of Chaldon manor and its relationship to Banstead is set out in a court case in the late 19th century arising from Sir William Craddock-Hartopp's attempt to buy up the common rights on the wastes of Banstead manor. See for example SRO 187/2/5.
- 28 The descent of both Chaldon Court and Tollsworth after the Reformation are set out by Manning & Bray, ii, opp. p.441.
- 29 (Brit.Lib. MS Cotton Cleop.C.VII) Unfortunately poorly calendared by Heales in *Records of Merton Priory*. There is much confusion caused by Peter de Tolworth (Talewrth) taking his name from Tolworth near Kingston rather than Tollsworth. Both names occur several times in the charters.
- 30 Merton Cart. f 80. Blair in correspondence to owner.
- 31 Merton Cart f 176.
- 32 VCH iv p188.
- 33 Manning & Bray ii p.441.
- 34 Rumble, 1976, p.175.
- 35 VCH, iv, p.190.
- 36 Surrey History Centre.
- 37 St Thomas Hospital cart, 835 etc.



Roffes Lane – the parish boundary until 2000 – in c.1925.
The houses to the left are on the bridleway to Willey
Postcard courtesy of Roger Packham