http://kentarchaeology.org.uk/research/archaeologia-cantiana/

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382
© 2017 Kent Archaeological Society

QUEEN ELIZABETH I AT TILBURY AND IN KENT

MARION COLTHORPE

Queen Elizabeth I's visit to Tilbury Camp in 1588 is not only one of the most celebrated events of her reign, but also one of the best documented. Nevertheless, at least one question remains to be answered: where did the Queen stay overnight on her way home from Tilbury after her review of her troops and her famous speech? This has been the subject of some conjecture. Essex historians have claimed the honour for their own county. It can, however, be proved beyond a doubt that at the end of one of the most momentous episodes of her reign the Queen stayed not in Essex but in Kent, and it seems desirable to set the record straight.

The Queen left St. James's Palace on Thursday, 8 August, 1588, was rowed down river in the royal barge to Tilbury, and after a preliminary review of her troops spent the night, in the words of *Elizabetha Triumphans*, a contemporary ballad by James Aske, 'Full three miles distant' at 'Maister Ritche his house'.[1] This house is identified more precisely by John Stow, writing in 1590, as 'the house of Mr Edward Rich, a justice of that shire, in the parish of Horndon'.[2]

On Friday, 9 August, the Queen, having reviewed and addressed her troops, left Tilbury in her barge to return to St. James's Palace, no doubt intending to complete the journey that day. In 1797, however, extracts from the churchwardens' accounts of St. Margaret's, Westminster, were printed and these showed that the Queen did not arrive back at St. James's until the *following* day, for the churchwardens made payments to their bellringers for ringing the bells on 8 August when the Queen 'went from St. James's to the Camp', and on 10 August when she 'came from the Camp to St.

[1] J. Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, 2nd Edn. (1823), ii. 567.

[2] J. Stow, *A Summarie of the Chronicles of England. . .unto 1590* (1590), 751.

James's'.[3] What had happened to delay the Queen's return, and where did she spend the 'missing' night?

The clue as to what had happened is in James Aske's ballad, which gives a graphic description of a storm, with torrential rain and thunder and lightning, which broke out soon after the Queen's departure from Tilbury, 'signes of the griefe for her departure thence. . .'.[4] It was evidently this sudden storm which forced the Queen to break her journey back to St. James's, although the ballad gives no hint that her return to St. James's was delayed, and no indication as to where she stayed. Nearly 300 years later (in 1871) a local historian suggested that the Queen landed at Purfleet in Essex and slept 'at Belhus, Aveley, as local tradition avers she did'.[5] Whether the Queen stayed at Belhus was discussed at more length by Miller Christy in articles in the *Essex Review* of 1917 and in the *English Historical Review* of 1919; in the latter article he stated that 'there are some grounds for believing' that the Queen spent the night 'in the mansion of Edward Barrett, esquire, of Belhus Park, in Aveley'.[6] E.K. Chambers attempted to trace the Queen's itinerary in his 'Court Calendar' in *The Elizabethan Stage*, (1923), and he followed Christy in giving the location as Belhus (though with a query).[7] In 1933, J.W. Burrows (ignoring the St. Margaret's churchwardens' accounts) suggested that the Queen did not stop at Belhus, but went straight back to St. James's, as was surely her original intention at such a time of national crisis.[8] On the other hand, two Essex historians, writing in 1948 and 1973, stated definitely that the Queen visited Belhus in 1588,[9] so that what was referred to as 'tradition' in 1871 had supposedly become fact a century later.

A map giving the true route followed by the Queen both to and from Tilbury was acquired by the British Museum as long ago as 1936. It is a map of 1588 by Robert Adams, the Surveyor of the Works, which shows the Thames from Lambeth to Tilbury Hope, and which has a 'pricked line' indicating the Queen's route.[10] After the

[3] J. Nichols, *Illustrations of the Manners and Expences of ancient Times in England. . .* (1797), 22.

[4] Nichols, *Progresses*, ii. 573–4.

[5] W. Palin, *Stifford and its Neighbourhood* (1871), 106.

[6] M. Christy, 'The Progresses of Queen Elizabeth through Essex and the Houses in which she stayed', *Essex Review*, xxvi (1917), 186–8; 'Queen Elizabeth's Visit to Tilbury in 1588', *Eng. Hist. Review*, xxxiv (1919), 58–60.

[7] E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923), iv. 103.

[8] J.W. Burrows, 'Tilbury Fort', *J.B.A.A.*, n.s. xxxviii (1933), 100.

[9] W.A. Mepham, 'Visits of professional touring Companies to Essex 1537–1642', *Essex Review*, lvii (1948), 214. W. Addison, *Essex Worthies*, (1973), 65.

[10] British Library: Add MS 44839.

map was donated to the Museum, it was discussed in an article by A.J. Collins, who included a reproduction of the map and pointed out that on 9 August 'the dotted line carries us back to Erith. Here or hereabout she [the Queen] must have spent the night. . . .'[11]

There are other contemporary documents which confirm that the route shown by Adams, and the conclusion drawn from it by Collins, are correct and that the Queen came ashore not in Essex but in Kent and stayed not in Aveley but in Erith. The most important of these documents is the Account of the Cofferer of the Royal Household for the year ending 30 September, 1588, which is a day-by-day summary in Latin of the Cofferer's expenditure on eleven different items on each day of the year (pantry, buttery, wardrobe, kitchen, poultry, scullery, saucery, halls and rooms, stables, fees, alms).[12] Each daily summary also gives the exact place where the Queen stayed that night. The account shows that she was in residence at St. James's Palace throughout August 1588, except for the nights of 8 and 9 August. On 8 August the account has '*Regina apud Tilburye*', with a total expenditure by the Cofferer of £130 12*s*. 5¼*d*.; on 9 August '*Regina apud Erith*', with a total expenditure of £105 8*s*. 8¼*d*. Here, therefore, is unimpeachable evidence to support the correctness of the route shown on Adams's map, though if confirmation is needed it can be found in a letter written on 11 August by Thomas Fowler, who was in the service of the Earl of Leicester, and who wrote that on the previous day he had left Tilbury Camp, 'my Lord being with the Queen at Erythe', and that a landing by the Spaniards was expected on 12 August.[13]

The question as to exactly whereabouts in Erith the Queen stayed on this unpremeditated visit at the height of the invasion scare can be answered from two further royal accounts, the Accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber and of the Office of the Works. A section of the Treasurer of the Chamber's Account in each year is devoted to payments to various gentlemen ushers for 'apparelling' or 'making ready' houses at which the Queen was proposing to stay, whether for several nights, overnight, or even merely for a single meal. Only once during her entire reign was a house 'made ready' for the Queen at Erith, and this was in *April* 1588. Richard Brackenbury, gentleman

[11] A.J. Collins, 'The Progress of Queen Elizabeth to the Camp at Tilbury, 1588', *British Museum Quarterly*, x (1935–6), 164–7.

[12] PRO: E101/432/2. Transcripts of Crown copyright records in the Public Record Office appear by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. Abbreviations have been extended.

[13] (Ed.) G.D. Owen, *Calendar of the Manuscripts. . . at Longleat. . .*, vol. v, *Talbot, Dudley and Devereux Papers 1533–1659* (1980), 211.

usher, and nine yeomen and grooms, were paid a total of 78*s.* 8*d.* 'for makinge readie for her majestie at Eareth Mr Comptons howse' in April 1588.[14] Mr Compton was presumably a kinsman of Henry Compton, first Baron Compton (1538–89; of Compton Wynyates, Warwickshire); Lord Compton's mother, Anne Countess of Pembroke, had come into possession of Erith manor on the death of her own mother, to whom Henry VIII had granted the manor.[15] This April visit to Erith was apparently merely a visit for dinner (a midday meal) from Greenwich Palace, where the Queen spent most of April; it is not mentioned in the Cofferer's Account, which only gives the locations of the Queen's overnight stays in 1588. By coincidence, however, in August 1588 it was again Richard Brackenbury and his men who made ready 'maister Riche his howse in Essex' for the Queen near Tilbury.[16]. What could be more natural than that when the violent storm on 9 August forced the Queen to take shelter and a hasty decision had to be made as to where she should land, she came ashore at Erith because one of her household – probably Brackenbury himself – recalled that Compton's house at Erith was suitable to accommodate the Queen? That this was where she stayed is confirmed by the Works Account for the year ending 31 March, 1589,[17] which includes the following payments, listed consecutively after others under the general heading 'Sundry houses in the time of her highness progress':

Westilburie, lvi^{s} x^{d} ob, and Mr Riches house, lxii^{s} vii^{d}.

Erithe, the Lord Comptons house, xxxvi^{s} viii^{d}.

The payment refers to Lord Compton, not to a 'Mr Compton', and Lord Compton was probably himself at Erith in that eventful week, for his mother the Countess of Pembroke, who was the granddaughter of Sir Richard Walden of Erith, died in London in July 1588 and was buried at Erith on 7 August.[18]

From Erith (on Saturday, 10 August), according to Robert Adams's map, the Queen went by river as far as Greenwich Palace, then overland to Lambeth. Finally, she crossed the river to Westminster to complete her unexpectedly prolonged return journey, after her historic visit to Tilbury.

[14] PRO: AO1 385/26; account for year ending 30 September, 1588. (There is no reference to Belhus in any of the Treasurer of the Chamber's Accounts).

[15] E. Hasted, *History. . .of Kent*, ii (1797), 242–3.

[16] PRO: AO1 385/26.

[17] PRO: E351/3223.

[18] G.E.C., *The Complete Peerage*, revised Edn, x (1945), 409.

THE PERIOD OF MERCIAN RULE IN KENT, AND A CHARTER OF A.D. 811.

K.P. WITNEY

Kent is the best documented of all counties before the Conquest, and for no period more so than that of the Mercian domination at the end of the eighth and beginning of the ninth centuries. The great bulk of the surviving material, however, consists of land charters, wills, or records of disputes concerning land. Although it is surprising how much information of a more general kind can be derived from these to supplement the few laconic entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the often dubious accounts of medieval historiographers, there is still a great deal to be argued over before we can construct anything like a true picture of Kent at this time.

We shall make use of a number of contemporary documents in the account that follows. But against the wider background of a country devastated by the Mercian armies, exposed to increasingly destructive Viking raids, and the scene of a prolonged struggle between the archbishop and a tyrannical king, we propose particularly to focus upon a charter of A.D. 811,[1] which illustrates certain more enduring aspects of Kentish society and its organisation. This document, of which the original is in the British Museum, records the sale by the Mercian conqueror Coenwulf to Archbishop Wulfred of lands near Rainham and Faversham and at Canterbury. A copy, made apparently *c.* A.D. 1000, adds to the conveyance lands at Elmsted on the Downs and on Romney Marsh, but this seems a conflation of what had been separate transactions, and it is solely with the original that we shall be concerned.

[1] *Cartularium Saxonicum*, (Ed.) W. de G. Birch, 1885–93, doc . 335.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Mercian domination over Kent had been established by Offa following the death in 762 of the last male representatives of the native dynasty, Aethelberht II and Eadberht, who had died within a few months of each other; but it had been interrupted by two determined rebellions, of which the first won back the independence of the old Kingdom for some ten years between 775 and 785 and the second had been crushed, in 798, only after the country had been devastated from end to end,[2] as far as the land of the *Merscware*, or Romney Marsh, as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* tells us,[3] and 'almost to its utter destruction', as Simeon of Durham adds.[4] The first rebellion had been supported by the archbishop of the time, Jaenberht, who came from the Kentish nobility and had previously been abbot of St. Augustine's.[5] On its suppression Offa browbeat or cajoled Pope Hadrian I into subtracting from the authority of Canterbury all the Midlands and East Anglian dioceses and assigning them to a new archbishopric created at Lichfield; and on Jaenberht's death in 792, he secured the appointment at Canterbury itself of a Mercian successor Aethelhard.[6]

The second rebellion broke out immediately on Offa's death in 796 and was led by an apostate priest, Eadberht Praen, who may have been descended from the old royal house in the female line or have been the son of a leader of the first rebellion, Egbert II, and have been unwillingly inducted into the priesthood in order to pre-empt whatever claims he had to the throne. It caused the precipitate flight of Aethelhard, who was only restored to his see after the Mercian reconquest,[7] in which Eadberht Praen was captured and taken as a slave into Mercia, where his eyes were put out and both hands chopped off.[8] This was the work of Coenwulf, who had now succeeded to the Mercian throne. By this time, however, it had become apparent that the separate metropolitan see at Lichfield could no longer be maintained. There had been strong opposition to

[2] K.P. Witney, *The Kingdom of Kent*, Chichester, 1982, 198–214.
[3] *Sub.* A.D. 796, the dating being two years wrong here.
[4] Simeon of Durham, *Historia Regum*, (Ed.) T. Arnold, 1885, ii, 59.
[5] Thomas of Elmham, *Historia Monasterii S. Augustini Cantuariensis*, (Ed.) C. Hardwick, 1858, 319, 328–30.
[6] N. Brooks, *The early History of the Church of Canterbury*, Leicester, 1984, 114–20.
[7] W. Stubbs, 'Eadberht Praen', in (Eds.) W. Smith and H. Wace, *Christian Biography*, 1880, ii. 4–5.
[8] *A.-S. Chron. sub.* A.D. 796, correctly 798.

it from the start within the English Church and, in correspondence with Pope Leo III, Coenwulf had been forced to admit that it had been prompted chiefly by Offa's hatred of Archbishop Jaenberht and the Kentish people. He went on to hint that an acceptable solution would be to reunite the southern province but to move the archbishopric from Canterbury to London as Gregory the Great had originally intended (and where it would have come under secure Mercian control). The Pope would not, however, agree to such a breach with tradition. In 802, he granted Aethelhard a privilege restoring Canterbury to its old authority, and this was confirmed at a synod held in 803.[9] Two years later, when Wulfred succeeded Aethelhard as archbishop, although Kent had been desolated Canterbury had recovered its ancient prerogatives.

We know almost nothing of Coenwulf's background, except that he appears to have come from a remote, but numerous, clan of the Mercian royal house and to have succeeded unexpectedly to the throne after Offa's son and heir Ecgfrith had died within a few months of his father.[10] Even after the reconquest of Kent his power did not reach as far as Offa's had done. Of the other ancient English kingdoms East Anglia, Essex and Sussex all remained firmly within the Mercian grasp; but Offa had also effectively brought Wessex under his control, its king, Beorhtric, being his son-in-law and little more than a compliant underling.[11] Only Northumbria, which was degenerating into anarchy and posed no threat, then remained outside the Mercian hegemony. But shortly after Coenwulf's accession Wessex began to reassert its independence. On Beorhtric's death, the people expelled his hated Mercian wife and took as their king a young prince, another Egbert, who had been exiled at Offa's insistence because his father had been chosen by the Kentishmen to lead them during the dying stages of their first rebellion against Mercian rule.[12] Not only had Wessex slipped from Coenwulf's power but there remained the incipient threat of a revival of the alliance between it and the Kentishmen which for a time had shaken even Offa's hold. Through his father Egbert had a good reversionary claim to the throne of Kent, although it was not until 825, four years after Coenwulf's death, that he was able to assert it.[13]

The other party to the conveyance of 811, Archbishop Wulfred,

[9] Brooks, *op. cit.*, 125–7.
[10] F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn., 1971, 225.
[11] *Ibid.*, 225.
[12] *Ibid.*, 209, 220.
[13] *A-S. Chron.*, *sub.* A.D. 823, correctly 825.

came from the community of Christchurch, where he had been Aethelhard's archdeacon.[14] His earlier background is debatable, but he was clearly a wealthy man in his own right. He is known to have had some property in north-east Kent, and this, together with the Christchurch connection, led Haddan and Stubbs to believe that he sprang from the remnants of the Kentish nobility.[15] Recently, however, Nicholas Brooks has made out a good case for believing that his family origins lay in Middlesex.[16] Most (though not all) of the Kentish estates that are known to have been his personal property at one time or another he can be shown not to have inherited but to have acquired; whereas his nephew and legatee Werhard, a priest, is found from an admittedly late copy of his will, and one containing a number of anachronisms, to have had the bulk of his patrimony, so described, in Middlesex. Furthermore, a number of Werhard's neighbours or predecessors in Middlesex had names beginning, like his own and Wulfred's, with the initial letter W, which suggests common family connections in this area. Although there is still room for argument the evidence does seem to point to a stronger early association with Middlesex than with Kent. To this Nicholas Brooks adds that it is most unlikely that Coenwulf, with the example of Jaenberht before him, would ever have permitted the election of another Kentishman as archbishop.

If this is correct, the likelihood is that it was after Aethelhard's flight from Canterbury in 796 that his association with Wulfred began, and that it was only on his restoration that Wulfred came to Canterbury as his archdeacon to help him in settling the affairs of what must have been a thoroughly demoralised community at Christchurch. Wulfred's influence over Aethelhard was obviously great; as his mainstay at a time of great difficulty he would have had strong claims to succeed him in 805; and as an outsider from Middlesex, which had long been under Mercian domination, there could, in Coenwulf's eyes, have been no evident bar to his election. But what Coenwulf failed to appreciate was the extent to which Wulfred had taken on a local colouring. He was in a far stronger and more independent position than the hapless Aethelhard had been and had become as throughly committed to the interests of Christchurch as if it had always been his own community.He was, said Gervase of Canterbury 'a most wise man' who 'in all his works . . .

[14] *Cart. Sax.*, 352.

[15] (Eds.) A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, 1871, iii, 557.

[16] Brooks, *op. cit.*, 132.

considered the advantage and peace of the church of Canterbury which he ruled'.[17] Wide as Wulfred's responsibilities were, Canterbury was his power base, which he did everything possible to strengthen, and in defence of the Church's rights it was on Kentish ground that he consistently took his stand.

In the charter of 811, Coenwulf is made to say that the lands are being conveyed out of his 'most reverent love' for Wulfred – and in return for a large sum of money. In fact, the relationship between the two men was one of almost constant hostility interrupted by brief periods of truce. In 807, only two years after Wulfred's election, Pope Leo III had written to Charlemagne complaining that 'Coenwulf had not yet made peace with his archbishop'.[18] By 811, the quarrel appears temporarily to have been patched up, but in 817 there came a complete rupture as a result of which Wulfred was ousted from Canterbury for four years while certain accusations that Coenwulf had lodged against him in Rome (the nature of which we do not know) were being investigated.[19] Even when Wulfred had been exonerated Coenwulf still refused to restore him to his see – 'whatever the pope or emperor might say' – until he had surrendered an immense, though now unidentifiable, estate and paid in addition a sum of £120,[20] equivalent it seems to the *wer-geld*, or blood-money, of a Mercian prince.[21] Only after Coenwulf's death did Wulfred secure compensation for these losses.

THE CONTEST FOR CONTROL OVER THE ABBEYS

The prime cause for the enmity appears to have been Wulfred's attempt to restrain the unbridled nepotism of the Mercian royal house and, in particular, a struggle for control over the Kentish abbeys and their revenues. To Coenwulf a defeated Kent was little more than a source of plunder, from which the abbeys were the richest morsels to be picked out. Immediately after his restoration Aethelhard had been made to agree to the surrender of Christchurch's right to a monastery at Cookham in Berkshire, in which

[17] Gervase of Canterbury, 'Actus Pontificum', Vol. II in (Ed.) W. Stubbs, *The historical works of Gervase of Canterbury*, 1880, 347–8.

[18] Haddan and Stubbs, *op. cit.*, iii, 563.

[19] Stenton, *op. cit.*, 229–30; Brooks, *op. cit.*, 133–4.

[20] *Cart. Sax.*, 384. The estate was at *Iognes homme* (*sic*). Brooks suggest that it was Eynsham in Oxfordshire (Brooks, *op. cit.*, 104), but this is speculative and there is no independent evidence for it.

[21] Witney, *Kingdom of Kent*, 223, referring back to 163–4.

Offa's widow had been installed, in return for properties at Northfleet, Teynham and near Orpington,[22] which were supposed to be of comparable value but clearly were not (as we shall see later). Coenwulf's brother Cuthred was made sub-king in Kent, principally it seems to put him in possession of the royal revenues, since it was not thought necessary to replace him on his death *c.* 807.[23] In or about 804, an obscure kinsman, Cunred, was made Abbot of St. Augustine's[24] and it seems that already by then the Abbey of Lyminge, and possibly Minster-in-Thanet as well, had passed to a favoured and long-time supporter of the Mercian house, the Abbess Selethryth.[25] All this had happened in Aethelhard's time. Wulfred's attempts to establish some sort of authority over these royal protégés would have been enough by itself to sour his relations with Coenwulf, apart from the disgust that he must surely have felt at the treatment meted out to a prostrate people, to whom Canterbury owed a particular duty of care. But it was not until 817 that the issue finally came to a head. It then centred upon control over the abbeys of Reculver and Southminster, of which the latter had been assigned by Coenwulf to his daughter Cwoenthryth.[26]

The practice of placing princesses or royal widows in charge of religious houses was of long standing; in fact, the Kentish kings had led the way in it. But it was they themselves who had founded and endowed the abbeys, the appointments were confined to mixed houses for men and women, their prime object had been to demonstrate the commitment of the royal line to the cause of religion, and those appointed were usually worthy of the charge, a company commemorated in later legend as the 'Kentish royal saints'.[27] This was very different from treating the houses as mere loot, to be distributed at best to nonentities like Cunred, made heir to the premier abbey in England, and at worst to such as Cwoenthryth, a woman of positively evil reputation. Nor were these activities confined to Kent. In 798, while Wessex under Beorhtric was still utterly subservient to Mercia, Coenwulf obtained from Rome a special dispensation by which Glastonbury Abbey, rivalling even St. Augus-

[22] *Cart. Sax.*, 291.
[23] Haddan and Stubbs, *op. cit.*, iii, 556.
[24] *Cart. Sax.*, 316.
[25] *Ibid.*, 317.
[26] *Ibid.*, 384; Brooks, *op. cit.*, 180–3.
[27] K.P. Witney, 'The Kentish Royal Saints: An Enquiry into the Facts behind the Legends', *Arch. Cant.*, ci (1984), 1–22.

tine's in wealth and prestige, was given in hereditary ownership to his son Cynehelm.[28]

Against such nepotism Wulfred took his stand on the principle, said to have been established in Kent by King Wihtred a hundred years earlier, and later accepted by Aethelbald of Mercia and other rulers of the time, that appointments to religious houses should be made only with the approval of the bishops of the dioceses and the archbishop in his own.[29] Wihtred's privilege, however, survives only in an eleventh-century copy which, from its construction and wording, appears to have been based on a manuscript of Wulfred's rather than Wihtred's time, though some of the material, including the witness list, seems properly to belong to the early eighth century. Nicholas Brooks and others have dismissed it as a Christchurch forgery concocted by Wulfred, or at his bidding, to support his case against Coenwulf and given verisimilitude by incorporating some genuine early matter.[30] That some document dealing with the affairs of the Kentish Church had been issued by Wihtred *c.* 710 is hardly in doubt, nor is there any reason to question the venue, said to have been Bapchild. This much must have been well known. The question is whether the version we have is a true account of what was agreed at Bapchild, or honestly believed to have been so, or an outright falsification; and the answer to that turns largely on whether, in the circumstances of Wihtred's time, he would ever, in fact, have committed himself to a document in these terms.

The argument that a Kentish king of the early eighth century would not have issued a privilege that weakened the control which his predecessors had exercised over appointments to the abbeys is a good deal less convincing than it has been made out to be. By Wihtred's reign circumstances had changed. During the period of foreign invasion and usurpation that had preceded his accession a number of the Kentish houses – Minster-in-Thanet, Southminster and probably Lyminge – had fallen into the virtually hereditary ownership of a rival branch of the royal family of whom the Mercians had made use,[31] while the monastery of Hoo had been subordinated to a Mercian foundation, *Medeshamstede* (Peterborough).[32] Although Wihtred had restored the kingdom, his authority over these places had been lost or dangerously attenuated. On the other hand the archbishop of

[28] H.P.R. Finberg, *The Formation of England, 550–1042*, 1976, 105–6.
[29] *Cart. Sax.*, 1191.
[30] Brooks, *op. cit.*, 191–7.
[31] Witney, Kentish Royal Saints.
[32] *Cart. Sax.*, 89; Stenton, *op. cit.*, 160.

the time, Berhtwald, a Kentishman once Abbot of Reculver,[33] was his life-long partner and confidant, who could be relied upon to act in concert with him in appointments to the abbeys as in other matters. Both men were disciples of Theodore of Tarsus, who had been very much concerned, in rooting out Celtic practices, to establish episcopal authority on a firm foundation; and Berhtwald had been engaged, in support of the Northumbrian kings and bishops, in a prolonged dispute with St. Wilfrid, in which a major bone of contention was control over the numerous religious houses that Wilfrid had founded in the North and Midlands.[34] The practice was also growing there of laymen setting up religious establishments of their own and treating them virtually as family preserves.[35] The issue was, therefore, already a live one in Wihtred's reign and (contrary to suggestion) this was precisely the sort of lead that he and Berhtwald might have been expected to give. What Wulfred was trying to do was to restore the primacy of Christchurch over all religious houses in Kent that it had enjoyed during the last years of the kingdom in complete harmony with its rulers. Indeed, during the reign of Wihtred's sons the archbishops seem almost to have taken the kingdom under their tutelage,[36] and it was entirely in keeping with this that Jaenberht, Kentish himself, should have supported the first rebellion against Mercian usurpation. It was the bond between Canterbury and the people that Offa set himself to destroy, and did, and that it was a part of Wulfred's mission to repair.

THE WITNESS LIST OF 811: CWOENTHRYTH AND SELETHRYTH

Against this background the witness list of the charter of 811 is unusually interesting. It was, as we have said, issued at a general Mercian council held in London at which, we are told, a number of other matters were discussed. It was witnessed by Coenwulf and his queen, Aelthryth; Sigered, King of Essex; Wulfred with the Bishops of Worcester, Selsey and Rochester; three Mercian *principles*, or sub-regents, including the king's son Cynehelm; four *duces* or ealdormen, in charge of different provinces of the Mercian domain; one royal official; two individuals, Cyneberht and Coenwald, described simply as the king's relatives; two abbesses, Cwoenburg and

[33] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, v, 9.
[34] Finberg, *op. cit.*, 48–55.
[35] Stenton, *op. cit.*, 159–61.
[36] Witney, *Kingdom of Kent*, in note 2, 181–97.

Seleburg (*sic*); and one priest, Cuthred. With the possible exception of East Anglia, all the Mercian dominions, Kent, Essex, Sussex and the province of the *Hwicce* (including Worcester) were therefore represented. The preamble makes it clear, however, that although the Bishop of Rochester, Beornmod, had been called in as a witness he was not a member of the council itself, a point to which we shall return.

Sigered of Essex, described in this charter as a king, is in others given the title only of sub-king,[37] which more truly describes his position. Essex had been under the domination of Mercia for nearly 150 years,[38] and it was only by indulgence, and because it had proved such a willing tool, that its royal house had been permitted to survive. Sigered was to be its last representative, because 15 years later, after the overthrow of Mercian power by Egbert of Wessex, he was chased from the throne.[39] The most remarkable thing about this otherwise undistinguished line, traditionally descended from the heathen deity Seaxneat, is that from the time of its first known ruler, Sledda, who reigned around the middle of the sixth century, every one of his successors had S as the initial letter of his name.[40] Family alliteration was a feature of Anglo-Saxon times, but this was an extreme example of it. It was also pronounced in Coenwulf's branch of the Mercian royal house.

Cynehelm, the king's son (the same who had been granted the revenues of Glastonbury Abbey) was Coenwulf's intended successor, but died before he could take possession. According to later legend he was murdered at the instigation of his sister Cwoenthryth,[41] so clearing the way for an uncle, Coelwulf, who was himself deposed in 823 after a reign of only two years.[42] In the tenth century, and for no other apparent reason than his supposed murder, Cynehelm had become a cult figure, St. Kenelm.[43] Of other members of this extended clan who were present at the council by virtue merely of their relationship to the king we know nothing of Cyneberht, but Coenwald appears to have been a son of the Cuthred who had been made sub-king of Kent[44] but was now dead. Judging by the name, the

[37] E.g. *Cart. Sax.*, 340, 373.

[38] With brief intermissions ever since the intervention of Wulfhere of Mercia, *c.* A.D. 665: Bede, iii, 30.

[39] *A-S. Chron.*, A.D. 823, correctly 825.

[40] Stenton, *op. cit.*, 53–4.

[41] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, (Ed.) N.E.S.A. Hamilton, 1870, cap. 156, 294–5.

[42] *A-S Chron.*, *sub*. A.D. 821, correctly 823.

[43] Brooks, *op. cit.*, 102.

[44] W.G. Searle, *Anglo-Saxon Bishops, Kings and Nobles*, 1899, quoting *Cart. Sax.*, 1336.

priest Cuthred is likely also to have been a kinsman. Contemporary documents show that it was a regular practice for the councils to be attended by Queen Aelthryth and an assortment of relatives. This was very much ruled by a family Mafia, with all the internal feuding that might be expected from that and which does much to account for the rapid break-up of Mercian power once the dominating presence of Coenwulf himself had been removed.

But perhaps the most interesting names to appear among the witnesses were those of the Abbesses Cwoenburg and Seleburg (*sic*). It was most unusual for abbesses to attend councils of this kind, or to be called upon to subscribe to charters, unless they were considered to have some special standing or concern, and the names of these two have a suspicious similarity to those of the Cwoen*thryth* and Sele*thryth* whom we have previously mentioned. The identification is supported by another charter issued in the same year to the Bishop of Rochester and evidently at the same council since the witness list is identical but for the absence of Sele*burg* and three others and the significant substitution for Cwoen*burg* of Cwoen*thryth*, now described as the king's daughter.[45]

We first hear of Selethryth, properly so called, in 786 when, on the very eve of his suppression of the first Kentish rebellion, Offa granted her and her brother Ealdberht a substantial estate at Ickham.[46] Whether they were Mercian intruders or Kentish defectors we do not know, but the estate was evidently a reward for services rendered. Selethryth next appears in a contemporary document of 804 as Abbess of Lyminge,[47] and if we can trust Goscelin and other medieval chroniclers of St. Augustine's (as often we cannot) she had also by then been put in charge of the abbey of Minster-in-Thanet.[48] As St. Augustine's eventually became heir to the Minster lands this is perhaps a matter on which it ought to be believed. It may seem surprising that houses as renowned as Minster and Lyminge should have been held in plurality by someone who, however highly regarded by Coenwulf, was not a relative of his. But neither place was the prize that it had once been since both were now vulnerable to Viking attack, and Minster in particular, in its highly exposed position on Thanet, seems to have been in a state of near dissolution.

The purpose of the charter addressed in 804 to Selethryth, as Abbess of Lyminge, had been to provide that community with a place

[45] *Cart. Sax.*, 339.
[46] *Ibid.*, 247/8.
[47] *Ibid.*, 317.
[48] Thomas of Elmham, cap. 31, 221–2.

of refuge in Canterbury. Later hagiographers say that in time of danger the nuns of Minster had found safety at Lyminge itself[49] (though it seems more likely that they would have shared the sanctuary at Canterbury). According to the St. Augustine's chroniclers, Selethryth was actually burned to death at Minster on its eventual destruction by the Vikings;[50] but this story has a legendary quality and an account written by Wulfred himself, which refers to her death, gives no hint that it had occurred otherwise than naturally.[51] Whatever happened, it is clear from the silence of later records that Minster cannot have survived long into the ninth century, and, however fallible the traditions, it does seem that during its last years it had been drawn into some sort of dependency on Lyminge. This can be taken in two ways: either as confirming that Selethryth had been in charge of both places or, alternatively, as having left a misleading impression of that. The first is perhaps more likely, but there is no surviving contemporary evidence for it.

What we do know is that, as abbess of the one place or the other, Selethryth had become involved in disputes with Wulfred. According to his account, these were eventually composed on the understanding that an estate at Easole (in Nonington) should pass to him after both she and her brother Ealdberht had died. Ealdberht lived the longer of the two, dying in 820; upon which, however, a kinsman of his seized the deeds and handed them to Cwoenthryth at Southminster, of which she was then in charge. It was not until four years later, after repeated demands by Wulfred and when her father Coenwulf was no longer alive to protect her, that she was compelled at a synod to surrender the land.[52] This, however, was only one episode in a struggle that had developed over control of Southminster itself, as also of Reculver, of which we know less.

Although, as it seems, Cwoenthryth was already an abbess in 811 that does not mean that she had yet been installed in Southminster, since she had previously been made head of a house founded by Coenwulf at Winchcombe in Gloucestershire (where, tradition has it, the mutilated Eadberht Praen had been taken and was eventually manumitted).[53] There has been a persistent tendency among scholars to confuse Southminster with Minster-in-Thanet, although it was a separate establishment (we have suggested elsewhere at Eastry).[54]

[49] Brooks, *op. cit.*, 202.
[50] Thomas of Elmham, cap. 31, 221–2.
[51] *Cart. Sax.*, 378.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, (Ed.) W. Stubbs, 1881, 94–5.
[54] Witney, Kentish Royal Saints.

As control over Southminster was a major precipitant of the quarrel that broke out between Wulfred and Coenwulf in 817, it was presumably then that Cwoenthryth was inserted as its abbess. It seems that up to this time Wulfred had contrived to keep both it and Reculver firmly under his own authority: a document of 811 shows him actually transferring land from Reculver to Christchurch, with the consent of the then abbot, Beornwine.[55] This further double intrusion by Coenwulf, taking advantage no doubt of vacancies at both houses, was something that Wulfred was bound to resist. It would virtually have confined his control over the Kentish abbeys to Dover, still in the charge of his ally the Abbot Feologeld (who was briefly to succeed him as archbishop in 832).[56] Folkestone appears already to have gone with the others, since it is surely significant that it was there that Selethryth's brother Ealdberht is known to have died:[57] he may well have been in charge of it.

Cwoenthryth was the most hated of Wulfred's antagonists. After Cuthred's death *c.* 807, she appears to have become used as Coenwulf's chief instrument in Kent and later to have been very much mixed up in the intrigues over the succession. Whether or not there is any truth in the story that she plotted the murder of her brother Cynehelm, there certainly seem to have been some unsavoury dealings connected with the elevation of Coelwulf. The Canterbury moneyers were hesitant about striking coins in his name and only two of them ever did so; it was a year after he had taken the throne before Wulfred was prepared to consecrate him; and a year after that he had been deposed in favour of an obscure individual named Beornwulf, who probably came from a different branch of the royal house.[58] Mercian authority had been so weakened by these events, and control over an increasingly restive Kent had become so insecure, that Beornwulf was anxious to propitiate Wulfred in every way possible. It was with his support that Wulfred was able to regain the lands at Easole of which Cwoenthryth had deprived him and to secure compensation for the estate reft from him by Coenwulf in 821.[59]

More importantly, however, the crumbling of Mercian power gave Egbert of Wessex the opportunity for which he had evidently been waiting. In 825, he decisively defeated Beornwulf at the battle of

[55] *Cart. Sax.*, 332.

[56] *A-S. Chron.*, *sub* A.D. 829, correctly 832. Feologeld appeared as a witness for Wulfred in the dispute over Easole (*Cart. Sax.*, 378).

[57] *Cart. Sax.*, 378.

[58] Brooks, *op. cit.*, 135–6.

[59] *Cart. Sax.*, 378, 384.

Ellendum (near Swindon),[60] asserted his claim to the Kentish crown and sent an army under his son to drive out the last of the Mercian underlings, a certain Baldred who, from his name, was probably a kinsman of Beornwulf[61] but may have been simply an adventurer who had snatched at a power that Beornwulf was too weak to deny him. Upon this the East Anglians broke into rebellion, called upon Egbert for help, and then forestalled this by themselves defeating and killing Beornwulf.[62] The Mercian débâcle was complete and Cwoenthryth was simply carried away like flotsam on the tide. In 826, we find Wulfred acting as head of the community of Southminster in an exchange of land with St. Augustine's, of which moreover the abbot was now a certain Wernoth who had previously been his 'priest abbot' at Christchurch and, judging again by name, may have been a relative of his.[63] (Family nepotism was not necessarily confined to the Mercians, and Wulfred's nephew Werhard was soon to become 'priest abbot' of Christchurch in his turn).[64] 'Kent was now permanently united under a common crown with Wessex, by which it was eventually to be carried into the realm of England.

THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The charter of 811 records one of a whole series of transactions by which Wulfred purchased property in Kent from the king, at his own expense and primarily for his own use though with the intention that it should ultimately vest in Christchurch. Other people had also been buying land, though none so assiduously, and it is important to understand the nature of the sales. Little of the property was in the king's direct ownership. Most of it was held by husbandmen who, by immemorial custom, owed certain rents and services to the king. The effects of a sale was to transfer these to the purchaser in perpetuity and to be held in hereditary right, which meant at his free disposal and that of his heirs; and the charter of 811 is careful to stipulate this. The property then became known as *bookland* (because it had been conveyed by deed), in contradistinction to *folkland*, where the ancient nexus between people and king remained.[65] Despite previous

[60] *A-S. Chron.*, *sub* A.D. 823, correctly 825. Stenton, *op. cit.*, 231.
[61] Brooks, *op. cit.*, 136.
[62] *A-S. Chron.*, *sub* A.D. 823, correctly 825.
[63] *Cart. Sax.*, 1337; Brooks, *op. cit.*, 142, 163.
[64] Brooks, *op. cit.*, 141.
[65] Stenton, *op. cit.*, 309–12. The distinction is most clearly drawn in a Kentish charter of A.D. 858 (*Cart. Sax.*, 496).

conveyances, mainly to the Church, the great bulk of Kent was still *folkland* at the time of the Mercian reconquest, and Coenwulf could sell or grant it away as he saw fit. He had succeeded to the patrimony of the Kentish kings and, typically, plundered it.

The transfers were, however, subject to certain vital reservations. Excepted from them were what became known as the *trinoda necessitas*,[66] the duties still owed to the king of military service, constructing fortification and repairing bridges, which, all else apart, were barriers to the penetration of hostile ships.[67] The charter of 811 not only reserves these but in doing so speaks of operations *contra paganos*, which can only refer to the Vikings, and adds to the normal duty of building fortifications that of destroying enemy ones, which shows that the raids had progressed beyond being merely hit and run affairs to the established of at least temporary bases.

Specifically, the lands sold to Wulfred in this transaction consisted of two properties in Canterbury with, literally, a 'third half' (*thridda half*) of another; going with these, two meadows on the east bank of the Stour; and, more importantly, two ploughlands (*terram duorum aratrum*) near Rainham and another two at or near Graveney. The 'ploughlands' were something of a misnomer, and we shall examine later what they really were. What first concerns us is the description given of their location. Those at Graveney were said to be *in regione suburbana ad oppidum regis quod ab incolis ibi Fefres ham appellatur*, that is 'in the region surrounding the royal township which the local inhabitants call Faversham'. The same formula was used, *mutatis mutandis*, to locate the plouhlands near Rainham, also described as a royal township, but with the intriguing addition that these lands were said to have been in west Kent.

The significance of the term *regio* appearing in this and other early Kentish charters is controversial. The view propounded by Jolliffe in 1933,[68] and dismissed with contumely by Gordon Ward in a review of his book published in the same year,[69] was that these were provincial units, precisely defined and of very ancient origin, precursors to the seven lathes among which Kent was divided in Domesday Book, each formed around what had been a court of the Kentish kings, and representing the fundamental and distinctive institution of the old

[66] Stenton, *op. cit.*, 289–90.

[67] N. Brooks, 'The Development of military Obligations in eighth- and ninth-century England', in (Eds.) P. Clemoes and K. Hughes, *England before the Conquest*, 1970, 69–84.

[68] J.E.A. Jolliffe, *Pre-Feudal England: The Jutes*, Oxford, 1933.

[69] *Arch. Cant.*, xlii (1933), 147–56.

Jutish kingdom. Because of the cavalier way in which Jolliffe handled parts of the evidence, it has taken a long time for his thesis to become accepted, and then with some important modifications and refinements, convincingly expounded by Professor Everitt in a recent work.[70] Jolliffe saw these early provinces primarily as administrative units in which the reeves functioned as agents of the king; but not until Hlothere's reign (675–686) do we first hear of the existence of reeves,[71] and Aethelberht's laws (*c.* 603) mention no other royal official than a *laadrincmannan*, apparently an ambassador or herald.[72] To speak of administration in the primitive tribal society of pre-Christian Kent, when the lives of the people were governed by ancient custom based upon kin rights and the king's functions were primarily those of war leader and munificent host,[73] is an anachronism. Professor Everitt is surely right in insisting that in origin these were agrarian units, estates moulded to the topography of the country, each based upon a river or stream valley, a litoral, or it may be an island like Thanet, and rendering certain customary dues to the king.[74] He believes that there may at first have been some 40 estates of this kind, which is probably too many, although there were almost certainly more of them than the dozen or so *regiones* of the eight and ninth centuries. It was only after the Christian conversion that an administrative apparatus could be created with the growth of literacy, the support and example of the Church and the steady strengthening of kingly power, and this appears to have been accompanied by an amalgamation of the early Jutish estates into a lesser number of larger units, a process that continued, to result in the seven lathes of Domesday Book. Nevertheless, the *regiones* of the ninth century were still largely agrarian units, topographically determined. It seems that in the charter of 811 the object, in identifying those in which the lands lay, was at the same time to indicate the royal courts where the occupiers had been accustomed to answer for their rents and services.

The area surrounding Faversham had all the attributes of an early province, including its own, distinct, common in the Wealden forest;[75] and although by the time of the Conquest it had been absorbed into the lathe of Wye, the town was one of only five royal

[70] A. Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization: The Evolution of Kentish Settlement*, Leicester, 1986, 6–13, 69–92.

[71] 'Hlothere and Eadric', in (Ed.) F.L. Attenborough, *Laws of the earliest English Kings*, 1925, cap. 16, 18–23. See also reference to *procuratores* in *Cart. Sax.*, 45.

[72] 'Aethelberht' in Attenborough, *op. cit.*, cap. 7, 4.

[73] *Ibid.*, 4–7 *passim*.

[74] Everitt, *op. cit.*, 6–13, 69–92.

[75] K.P. Witney, *The Jutish Forest*, 1976, 249–53.

manors then remaining in Kent, of which the other four – Dartford (incorporating Sutton-at-Hone), Aylesford, Milton and Wye itself – were all the centres of lathes. The *regio* of 811 reappears three years later in another sale of land, also in the Graveney area, where it is described as that of *westan widde*,[76] a name that survives, well away to the other side of Faversham, in Westwood Court.[77] The original sense seems to have been the region, or province, 'to the west of the wood', clearly Blean Forest; a thoroughly apt description and one that shows it was confined to what became the hundreds of Boughton (under Blean), Faversham and probably Teynham, exclusive of the hundred of Felborough in the Stour valley to the opposite side of the Blean, although that was later absorbed with it into the lathe of Wye. (Wealden evidence confirms this, since the dens owned by manors in Felborough Hundred lay aside from those belonging to the manors around Faversham and were sited along a different drove.)[78]

Faversham, therefore, is a straightforward, almost classical, example; but the existence in 811 of a *regio* subordinate to Rainham is altogether unexpected. There is no other mention of Rainham as a royal township, and indeed no other reference to it at all before the Conquest. It does not even feature in Domesday Book because it was then merely a part of the great manor of Milton (next Sittingbourne) and of the lathe with which that manor was still virtually coterminous. Jolliffe believed that it had preceded Milton as the court of this lathe;[79] but, so far from being central to it, it lay on its perimeter and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* already describes Milton as a royal town in 892, when the Danes were encamped there. Because of its position on the Swale estuary directly opposite the Isle of Sheppey, which the Vikings devastated in 835 and where they wintered twenty years later,[80] Milton was always particularly vulnerable to piratical attack, and it cannot be ruled out that in 811 the court had been temporarily shifted to Rainham as a result. But it is better to accept the simple sense of the charter that it was then the *caput* of a distinct province, or royal estate. Moreover, the *Domesday Monachorum*, in entries closely contemporary with Domesday Book, shows a significant ecclesiastical rift in Milton lathe between the eastern half, where the parishes were grouped around a minster, or mother church, at Milton itself, and the western, where six parishes,

[76] *Cart. Sax.*, 348.
[77] J.K. Wallenberg, *Kentish Place-Names*, Uppsala, 1931, 28.
[78] Witney, *Jutish Forest*, 253–6.
[79] Jolliffe, *op. cit.*, 46.
[80] *A-S. Chron.*, *sub* A.D. 832, correctly 835, and A.D. 855.

including Rainham, had been placed in the charge of another minster established at Newington.[81] It may well be that the earlier provincial division was mirrored in this.

This brings us to the most puzzling feature of the charter, that the land 'suburban' to Rainham is said to have been in west Kent. This is no casual description, but had by this time acquired a precise significance. The division between east and west had been an administrative reality at least since Wihtred's time. It was reflected during the Mercian domination, briefly by the appointment of puppet kings, and then after the suppression of the first Kentish rebellion, led by one of them Egbert II,[82] by the substitution of ealdormen. The original dividing line was almost certainly that between the sees of Canterbury and Rochester, not only because it lent itself to the purpose but because the Church had been so intimately concerned in matters of government. The clearest indication of this is the siting of the shire moot on the diocesan boundary at Penenden Heath, beyond which point, Domesday Book tells us, the men of the four eastern lathes could not be compelled to go on royal summons. As late as 975, or thereabouts, this had also been the boundary between two provinces, that of Hollingbourne to the east and Aylesford to the west;[83] and although by the time of Domesday the first had been absorbed into the second, and the western division of the county so extended into the see of Canterbury, the shire moot remained anchored at its traditional site at Penenden Heath.

To the north of the Downs the early line of demarcation is more problematical. The *Domesday Monachorum* shows that by the close of the second century the whole of Milton lathe, of which Rainham was then an integral part, was within the diocese of Canterbury, and it was always later reckoned to be in the eastern division of the county. Yet, in 811 not only are we told that Rainham was in west Kent but, consistently with that, it can be inferred that it was also in the diocese of Rochester. This would explain the appearance of the bishop among the witnesses to the charter, although he was neither a direct party to the transaction nor named in the preamble as a member of the council that promulgated it. It looks as though it was the absorption of the once independent *regio* of Rainham into the lathe of Milton that transferred it from west to east Kent, but that in this case – unlike that of the amalgamation of Hollingbourne with Aylesford – this was accompanied by an adjustment of the diocesan

[81] Everitt, *op. cit.*, 261, 302–32.
[82] Witney, *Kingdom of Kent*, 198–206.
[83] *Cart. Sax.*, 1321; Witney, *op. cit.* in note 75, 40–1, 243–9.

boundary, the territory lost to Rochester being marked out by the six parishes subject to the mother church not of Milton itself but of Newington ('the new town')[84] which had superseded Rainham as the most important place in this area.

THE LAND UNITS: PLOUGHLANDS AND SULUNGS

From the last quarter of the seventh century, when authentic charters first appear, land units over most of England were commonly reckoned in *hides*, supposedly the amount needed to sustain a family,[85] but in Kent of the ploughland, or *terra aratri*, in its narrow definition an amount that could be handled by a full plough team of eight oxen but more generally all that could be expected to go with such a team, including not only the arable but associated meadows, copses, pastures and so on. The reason for the difference is too large a question to enter into here, beyond saying that it was one reflection of the highly distinctive land system of Kent. The *terra aratri* was always the larger unit. It may, on the eve of the Jutish conquest and settlement, when the conquerors were relatively few in number and there was plenty of good land for the taking, have approximated to the size of individual holdings but with the growth of population it had long ceased to do so; nor even did the units correspond with groups of holdings, which in Kent were in a continual state of flux through the workings of partible inheritance coupled with a free market in land.

The Kent Domesday deals in two types of units synonymous with the *terra aratrorum* of earlier times and among which one might expect to find their successors: these are the *sulungs*, derived from the Anglo-Saxon *sul(h)*, a plough, and the *terra carucis* (more simply *carucates*) again meaning ploughlands. The first are unique to Kent, where they substitute for the *hides* of other counties. Their special interest to the commissioners was as units for the payment of the land tax still known a Danegeld; for that reason they are meticulously entered, manor by manor; and we know a great deal about them from later manorial records. The second are common to all the counties, but in Kent are more negligently treated than in most, nearly a third of the entries being missing. They seem to have had only an approximate relationship to actual quantities of arable land, reckoned by the numbers of plough teams; and their precise signi-

[84] J.K. Wallenberg, *The Place-Names of Kent*, Uppsala, 1934, 259.
[85] Stenton, *op. cit.*, 279.

ficance has been something of a mystery. What can be said is that in those Kentish manors where they are recorded there are almost invariably more of them than of the *sulungs*, often many more, though occasionally the two figures are the same. Despite the many omissions the total entered for Kent is some 2,200, matched against 825 out of a full tally of around 1,065 *sulungs*. The appearance is that the *sulungs* were numbered among them, amounting to some 40 per cent of the whole.

Most scholars have assumed that the Domesday *sulungs* were the true successors to the *terra aratrorum* of the charters. Indeed, a direct connection can be established between the two. A charter ascribed to Offa in 774 speaks of *trium aratrorum* (at Lydd) *quod Cantianice dicutur threora sulunga*,[86] in translation 'three ploughlands called in Kentish usage three *sulungs*'; and although it has been suggested that this particular document is a Christchurch forgery the same words appear in several tenth-century charters of unquestioned authenticity.[87] In early vernacular wills, such as that of the ealdorman Oswulf *c.* 810, the term *sulung* is almost invariably used to define land.[88] An excellent example is provided by a document of 805–7 in which the record of a sale to Aethelnoth, reeve of Eastry, of *terram III aratrorum* at Eythorne is accompanied by a codicil bequeathing these lands, now described as *suaeleng*, to Christchurch;[89] and they can actually be traced among the 17 *sulungs* entered for Adisham manor in Domesday Book.[90] Thus far the chain of reasoning is complete. We can say with some certainty that the *sulungs* of 1086, and later manorial accounts, were units of great antiquity which would have featured as *terra aratrorum* in earlier Latin documents. It is tempting to assume a complete identity, ignoring the Domesday *carucates* altogether, but that would be mistaken.

The fact is that, wherever comparisons can be made between estates as they appear in the early conveyances and as we find them in 1086, the numerical relationship between the terra *aratrorum* of the first is much closer to that of the *carucates* than the *sulungs* of the second. We can illustrate this by a few examples from the period we are now studying. When Ickham was granted to Ealdberht and his

[86] *Cart. Sax.*, 214.
[87] *Ibid.*, 780, 791, 869.
[88] *Ibid.*, 330.
[89] Ibid., 318.
[90] S. Campbell, 'Some Aspects of the social and economic History of the Manor of Adisham *c.* 1200 to the Dissolution' (unpublished M.Phil. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1981), 53–5.

sister Selethryth in 785 it was said to contain 14 *terra aratrorum*,[91] yet, Domesday Book enters it as having only 4 *sulungs* as against 13 *carucates*. A charter of 799 shows that Charing then had 30 *terra aratrorum* and Great Chart 10;[92] but the figures recorded for the first in Domesday Book are 8 *sulungs* against 40 *carucates* and for the second 3 against 12. The Church estates tended to be built up through a series of acquisitions, not all the records of which have survived, the archbishop's manor of Bishopsbourne being a case in point; yet, already in 824 it had accumulated more than twice as many *terra aratrorum* as it later had *sulungs*.[93]

The only solution that appears to fit all the evidence is that while, to begin with, the terms *terra aratrorum* and *sulung* were used completely interchangeably, depending upon whether a document was in Latin or the vernacular, at some time prior to the Conquest *sulung* acquired a more restricted meaning, being confined to those among the ploughlands that were liable to Danegeld. This seems to have been a relatively late development. A charter attributed to 949 says that Reculver had 26 *sulungs*,[94] whereas in 1086 it had only 8, compared to 30 *carucates*; and although this document is thought to have been fabricated, it appears to have been so within 50 years of its purported date and to have been an accurate description of the manor as it was accounted then.[95] It seems, therefore, that it was not until the second phase of the Danish wars, in Ethelred the Unready's reign, when Danegeld had become of paramount importance and the lands liable to it needed to be clearly designated, that *sulung* was converted from a general description into a term of art.

It follows that, whatever the *carucates* may have represented in other counties, we have a good idea of what they were in Kent. There at least they were no novelty introduced for some inscrutable purpose of Domesday Book but conventional units of long standing, encountered as early as the last quarter of the seventh century and perhaps predating that. In comparing the relative sizes of the Kentish manors at the time of Domesday Book it is they that provide the surest guide. A common mistake, made even by some of the most distinguished scholars,[96] has been to use the *sulungs* for comparisons of this kind,

[91] *Cart. Sax.*, 247/8.

[92] *Ibid.*, 293.

[93] *Ibid.*, 319, 328, 332, 381. The manor of Bishopsbourne was created out of lands subtracted from Barham.

[94] *Ibid.*, 880.

[95] Brooks, *op. cit.*, 232–6.

[96] E.g. Brooks, *Church of Canterbury*, *passim*. Note in particular the use of *sulungs* to calculate the amount of land owned by the Kentish abbeys, 205–6.

although they accounted for only a lesser proportion of the land and one moreover that varied widely from place to place. Just how misleading such an approach can be may be illustrated from the Domesday entries for two manors which were the successors to earlier abbeys. Minster-in-Thanet had 62 *carucates*, of which as many as 48 were *sulungs*, and Lyminge 60 of which only 7 were. The two estates were very much of the same size, though if we were to judge by the *sulungs* alone we should conclude that Minster was seven times the larger. Where the *carucates* are missing from the Domesday account the best alternative criterion is the number of plough teams. Lyminge actually had rather more of these than Minster, 70 against 65.

Although the *sulungs* were singled out by the special conditions, such as liability to Danegeld, applying to the holdings contained in them there is no reason to suppose that their structure was any different from that of the other ploughlands; and because we know so much more about them from medieval documents, they provide us with the best general indication of the nature of the early *terra aratrorum*. The *sulungs* were defined units of land superimposed upon the holdings, rather like the grid on an Ordnance Survey map, remaining constant however much the kaleidoscope of land ownership within them might change, and covering not only arable land but meadows, pastures, shaves of wood and so on.[97] On each of these units broadly comparable rents and services were imposed which the occupiers, few or many, shared between them,[98] presumably in proportion to their individual stakes. Throughout a lathe, or a substantial part of one, the units were supposed in theory to be of a common area, which over most of east Kent was reckoned at 200 acres but elsewhere might be 180 or 160.[99] In fact, they often varied considerably in size but were still treated alike in accordance with the prevailing standard.[100] Since, however, the poorer the land the larger the actual units tended to be a rough equity was achieved in the distribution of burdens. Essentially, these were accounting units with the nominal acreage determining the rents charged on the whole, their true object being not so much uniformity of size as parity of

[97] Joliffe, *op. cit.*, 43–4; F.R.H. Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury*, 1966, 117–25; A.C.H. Baker, 'Open Fields and Partible Inheritance on a Kent Manor', *Economic History Review*, xvii (1964), 1–23.

[98] The most useful conspectus is to be found in (Eds.) S.J. Turner and H.E. Salter, *Register of St. Augustine's Abbey, commonly called the Black Book*, i (1915), *passim*.

[99] E.g. C.I. Elton, *The Tenures of Kent*, 1867, 132–8.

[100] Joliffe, *op. cit.*, 43; Du Boulay, *op. cit.*, 118.

value. The seven *sulungs* of Eastry manor provide a typical example. In accordance with the general standard of this lathe all were treated as containing 200 acres; three of them in fact did so but of the others two had around 205 acres, one 220 and one as much as 300.[101]

Liability to Danegeld was by no means the only feature that distinguished the *sulungs* from the other ploughlands. They were privileged freeholds of which the occupiers were primarily rent payers owing very little in the way of labour services.[102] In origin, it seems, it was military service that had counted, an obligation that persisted up to the time of Hastings and of which Danegeld was the obverse, being first raised either to buy off the enemy or to provide the sinews of war, for instance by building a fleet. The *sulungs*, in fact, defined the old warrior lands, and from their distribution they seem indeed to mark out the earliest land seizures of the Jutish fighting men. They were particularly numerous on Thanet and in the north-east, along Thameside and on the peninsula of Hoo, and in the broad valley of the lower Medway,[103] the best barley growing lands in Kent, cleared and cultivated in Roman times and earlier.

The remaining ploughlands, and by 1086 the larger number of them, appear to have consisted of three main categories. First, there were the lords' desmesnes, which included a relatively small share of the arable but a larger one of woodland and pasture. Second, there were the *inlands*, which were not freeholds but occupied by menial tenants, the *laets* of Aethelberht's laws[104] (*c.* 603) and the *inmen, avermen* and cottars of medieval accounts,[105] who owed little in rents but much more in services, largely fetching and carrying,[106] and had probably never had any military duties, other than in the commissariat. And, third, there were the 'new lands', areas of secondary settlement gained from forest or marsh and held on a variety of special terms appropriate to their surroundings and the circumstances of their occupants.[107]

As might be expected, there were especially large concentrations

[101] M. M. O'Grady, 'A Study of some of the Characteristics of the Holdings and Agriculture of Eastry Manor, East Kent, from *c.* 1086–1350' (unpublished M.Phil. thesis, University of London, 1981), 194–200.

[102] Du Boulay, *op. cit.*, 164–81; Joliffe, *op. cit.*, 19–39; Turner and Salter, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

[103] Witney, *Kingdom of Kent*, 62 and map facing 82.

[104] 'Aethelberht' in Attenborough, *op. cit.*, cap. 26, 7.

[105] E.g. Turner and Salter, *op. cit.*, 28, 101–4, 193–4, 308.

[106] *Ibid.*

[107] The Wealden dens were a notable example: see F.R.H. Du Boulay, 'Denns, Droving and Danger', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxvi (1961), 75–87.

of desmesne and associated *inlands* around the old royal courts. The reason why the proportion of *sulungs* to *carucates* was so low at Lyminge is that it had been the site of a court before the foundation of the abbey; and Domesday Book shows the same low proportion, at Wye where there were only 7 *sulungs* out of 52 *carucates* and where, the old royal desmesnes apart, we know that there were as many menial as freehold tenancies.[109] Even in such areas as Thameside and the lower Medway valley where *sulungs* were numerous, the royal manors were a striking exception to this: at Dartford there were only 1½ of them out of 40 *carucates* and at Aylesford 1 out of 15. The distinction between the warrior lands and the others was deeply embedded in Kentish custom, though in the early charters, which were concerned more with the identity and scale of the lands being conveyed than with their occupancy, it was enough to apply the common yardstick of the *terra aratri* to all.

There seems always to have been a known relationship between the *terra aratrorum* of Kent and the *hides* of the rest of England. We have suggested elsewhere that at the beginning of the eighth century, when Bede wrote, the *hide* was commonly reckoned at 40 acres,[110] so that the *terra aratri* was some four to five times the larger unit. It seems that this was very much the reckoning in 798 when Aethelhard was compelled to surrender Christchurch's claims to the monastery of Cookham in Berkshire in exchange for the equivalent of 110 *hides* in Kent.[111] Northfleet was said to account for 60 of these, which may be compared with the 14 *carucates* it had in 1086. Although, size for size, this may seem to have been a fair exchange the factor that appears to have been ignored was that it followed immediately upon the devastation of Kent at Coenwulf's hands, when Northfleet must have suffered particularly severely since it lay directly on the main invasion route down Watling Street – as did Teynham which also featured in the exchange (although the number of its *carucates* is unrecorded). It seems to have been in tardy recognition of the catastrophic fall in value of the despoiled Kentish lands that in 805 and again in 812 we find charters stipulating that one *sulung* (*sic*) was the equivalent to two *hides*.[112] As we have said, it was the relative value rather than size of the units that really mattered.

[108] *Cart. Sax.*, 73 of A.D. 689.
[109] H.E. Mülfeld, *A Survey of the Manor of Wye*, New York, 1933, *passim*.
[110] Witney, Kentish Royal Saints.
[111] *Cart. Sax.*, 291.
[112] *Ibid.*, 321, 341.

LAND VALUES AND PURCHASES

It seems that in the neighbourhood of Rainham a *sulung* was reckoned at 200 acres, but of Graveney 160 (40 being the standard applied thereabouts to the quarter fraction of the *yoke*).[113] On that basis, whatever may have been the actual sizes of the four *terra aratrorum* bought by Wulfred in 811, they would have been valued as containing some 725 acres together. It was common form for the conveyances to specify the various types of land comprised in the units and the facilities going with them, and in this charter the list is an unusually full one, illustrating the strong pastoral element in the Kentish economy and (in coastal lands like these) the close intermixture of agricultural and maritime activities. In addition to the arable fields it mentions pastures, meadows, woods, salt and freshwater marshes, sea channels and embankments, fisheries and salt pans. We are not told the area of the two meadows attached to the properties at Canterbury. The acute shortage of winter fodder made meadow by far the most valuable of all types of land,[114] but the Kent Domesday shows that it was also scarce and distributed in very small plots, so it is unlikely that that these would have amounted to more than an acre or so apiece.

The sum paid by Wulfred was 126 *mancuses*, each equivalent to 30 pence.[115] Making a small allowance for the properties and meadows at Canterbury this means that the lands near Rainham and Graveney were valued at around five pence an acre, perhaps a fraction more. The charter describes the payment as a large sum of money, a strictly relative description which suggests, however, that it was certainly no less than the current market value and contained no concealed rebate. The rate corresponds closely with what Wulfred had paid two years before for land at Barham[116] and the reeve Aethelnoth in 805/7 for his estate at Eythorne, when the price was described as 'fitting'.[117] But some thirty-five years earlier, before the suppression of the first Kentish rebellion and while the country was still unscathed, the leader of that rebellion Egbert II had sold to his close collaborator Aldhun four *terra aratrorum* (notionally 800 acres) at

[113] Du Boulay, *op. cit.* in note 97, 177 (Newington near Rainham) and 179 (Boughton under Blean, near Graveney).

[114] (Ed.) P. Morgan, *Domesday Book: Kent*, Chichester, 1983, CI. Meadow near Canterbury leased for an annual sum of nearly 2*s.* an acre. The annual return on ordinary arable land seems then to have been around 2*d.* an acre.

[115] H.M. Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, Cambridge, 1905, 23.

[116] *Cart. Sax.*, 328.

[117] *Ibid.*, 318.

Bishopsbourne[118] for a sum which worked out at twelve pence ha'penny an acre,[119] or two and a half times as much. The decline in the value of land following the despoliation by the Mercian armies seems thus to have corresponded almost exactly with the fall in relativity of the *sulung* to the *hide*. The progress of recovery can perhaps be traced in 814 when Wulfred paid ten pence an acre for other land near Graveney;[120] but this was described as *cyninges cua lond*, i.e. 'the king's cow land', which shows that it was choice pasture taken from the royal desmesne itself.

It seems that throughout this period Wulfred was buying land at the bottom of the market in the confident expectation that it would recover in value, as in fact it did, taking advantage in doing so of the short-sighted cupidity of a king who had little other thought than to snatch what he could from a conquered country. On Wulfred's part there was more to this than shrewd personal investment; by accumulating land he was steadily strengthening his own influence and that of Christchurch, on which the lands were to devolve; and the purchases were well chosen so as to establish a material presence in many different parts of the county, not only in his own diocese but in west Kent as well. It was no doubt a belated recognition of what had been happening that prompted Coenwulf to impose such confiscatory terms on Wulfred as the price of restoring him to his see in 821 – and within four years those losses had been compensated by estates in Middlesex, linking up with the family lands of Werhard, which were also to be settled on Canterbury.[121]

The royal patrimony was being dispersed to many others than Wulfred, though to none on the same cumulative scale. Grants from the conquered lands were made by Coenwulf to reward his followers or to benefit kinsmen such as Cunred, who as Abbot of St. Augustine's received *c.* 804 a splendid gift of 20 *terra aratrorum* at Lenham with thirteen Wealden dens attached.[122] Sales were made to other individuals like the reeve Aethelnoth, and to Wulfhard, previously one of Aethelhard's priests and very likely another relative of Wulfred, who later acquired the land from him.[123] By one means or another Oswulf, ealdorman of east Kent, amassed an estate of 20

[118] Brooks, *Church of Canterbury*, 115.
[119] 2,000 shillings at this time apparently reckoned at 5*d*. each: Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 12–20.
[120] *Cart. Sax.*, 348.
[121] *Ibid.*, 402.
[122] *Ibid.*, 316.
[123] *Ibid.*, 321.

sulungs (*sic*) on the fringes of Romney Marsh near Aldington.[124] These are a sample only. We shall never know the full number or magnitude of the transactions because the records have survived only where the lands eventually found their way into Church hands, mostly by bequest; but there is enough to show that the period of Mercian rule was marked by a proliferation of lay lordships, of which we hear increasingly from this time on. Many of these were small and most of them unstable, but all were *booklands* which passed permanently out of royal control. The ruin spread by the Mercian invasions, with stock lifted and holdings left derelict, also gave an opportunity to the more fortunate and astute of the husbandmen to buy out impoverished neighbours and perhaps go on from there to get the property 'booked'. In this way, men of humble origin might force their way into the privileged company of the lords. Thus the reeve Abba who died *c.* 835 in possession of estates at Chillenden and Challock is shown by his will to have had the blood-price of an ordinary ceorl.[125]

CONCLUSION

The period of Mercian rule, though it lasted only for sixty bitter years, was a major watershed in the early history of Kent. It saw the frustration of attempts, never to be repeated, to truncate the province of Canterbury or to remove the archbishopric to London; and it marked the transition from an independent kingdom to lasting union with Wessex, by which Kent was strengthened to survive the first great Viking onslaught, remaining outside the Danelaw and preserving intact the ancient customs that distinguished it. It is doubtful whether the Viking attacks, even at their height, compared in sheer, deliberate destructiveness with what the Mercian armies had perpetrated. Yet, it was in the miserable aftermath of that, and through the very circumstances it had created, that Wulfred was able so to enlarge the territorial possessions of Canterbury, and in such a way, as to buttress its spiritual authority with a material influence that reached to every part of the county. The struggle for control over the abbeys had not been in vain: a claim had been registered, so that on their destruction it was Canterbury that mostly became heir to their lands, picking up those not only of Reculver and Southminster

[124] *Ibid.*, 330.
[125] *Ibid.*, 412.
[126] Discounting the evanescent lordship of Odo of Bayeux.

(Eastry) but also of Lyminge. The course was charted which by the time of Domesday Book had led to the archbishop and his community of Christchurch becoming by far the largest landowners in Kent,[126] with a lordship four times as extensive as remained to the king himself. In the steady whittling away of the royal patrimony and break-up of the once unitary estates of the lathes there had already begun to emerge the shape of the later manorial system. Yet, beneath all these changes, profound as they were, there still ran the persistent strain of immemorial custom that governed the lives of the ordinary husbandmen, whoever may have become their lords, or were to become so after the Conquest.