Horley revisited: reflections on the place-name of a Wealden settlement

ROGER ELLABY

Following recent thinking on the elements 'horn' and 'leah', the place-name Horley is suggested as meaning 'horn-shaped common'. The common was apparently used to identify, as Hornley, a small pre-Domesday nucleated settlement that later became known as Lee Street associated with the horn-shaped, but now gone, Ley Green. The original settlement was probably connected with the conversion to farming of the central portion of Sutton's Wealden denn, but a lack of growth and its status as a cottage hamlet allowed the name to become attached to a wider area that included the possibly later and more important administrative centre around the manor house and church.

Introduction

To the casual visitor Horley is a small modern town that grew from its origins around the first railway station opened in 1841 and on land that had only recently been part of Thunderfield or Horley Common, enclosed in 1816.[1] To the resident, however, and those familiar with the district, Horley extends to a much larger area roughly equating with that part of the ancient eponymous parish lying south of the Burstow stream (fig 1). To the north is the district of Salfords while west of the river Mole is the more rural sector of the parish including the old farms of Bures, Crutchfield and Norwood: but where was the original *Horley* that gave its name to the parish and why and when was it so named?

Early Horley

The vast majority of the early records of Horley refer to lands and tenants 'in Horley' and 'of Horley' respectively but, as is sometimes mentioned, these descriptions clearly relate to the vill or parish rather than a particular place.[2] There are, however, a few 13th and early 14th century deeds that allude to specific and identifiable buildings situated 'at Horley' implying that at that time a 'place' of that name was recognised within and beyond the local community. The earliest is a deed of around the mid-13th century whereby Robert, son of Walter de Horleia, granted to his son Alfred 'a mill at Horleia at a rent of a silver mark (13s 4d) and a meadow and ploughland by the mill at a rent of 16d'.[3] The land conveyed to Alfred was probably part of the 50 acres immediately east of the mill that were granted by the abbot of Chertsey to the same Robert son of Walter (the clerk) of Hornle in 1223–35 and became known as Horleeslond.[4] The whereabouts of the mill as described in the last reference clearly identifies it as on the site of Horley Mill (figs 1 and 2), a name perpetuated through the ages until the last mill ground to a halt there in the late 19th century.[5]

A set of deeds of the early 14th century concern the recovery by John de Rutherwick, Abbot of Chertsey, of ten bond tenements in Horley that had fallen into the hands of freeholders by charters contrary to the statute of villeinage. The surrenders of the properties, and

[1] Tate 1943, 145.

[2] *Cartularies*, **II** (1): 1114–86, *passim*.

[3] Lane 1958, 6. Edmund Hulschire, 'the farmer of the mill of Horley', was still paying the ancient rent of 13s 4d in 1496 (*Cartularies*, **II** (1): 876).

[4] *Cartularies*, **II** (1): 1115, 1178.

[5] Stidder 1990, 32. First recorded as Horley Mill (*Horlemulle)* in 1332 (Gover *et al* 1934, 296) and 'the Mill of Horlee' in 1309 (*Cartularies*, **II** (1): 1144).
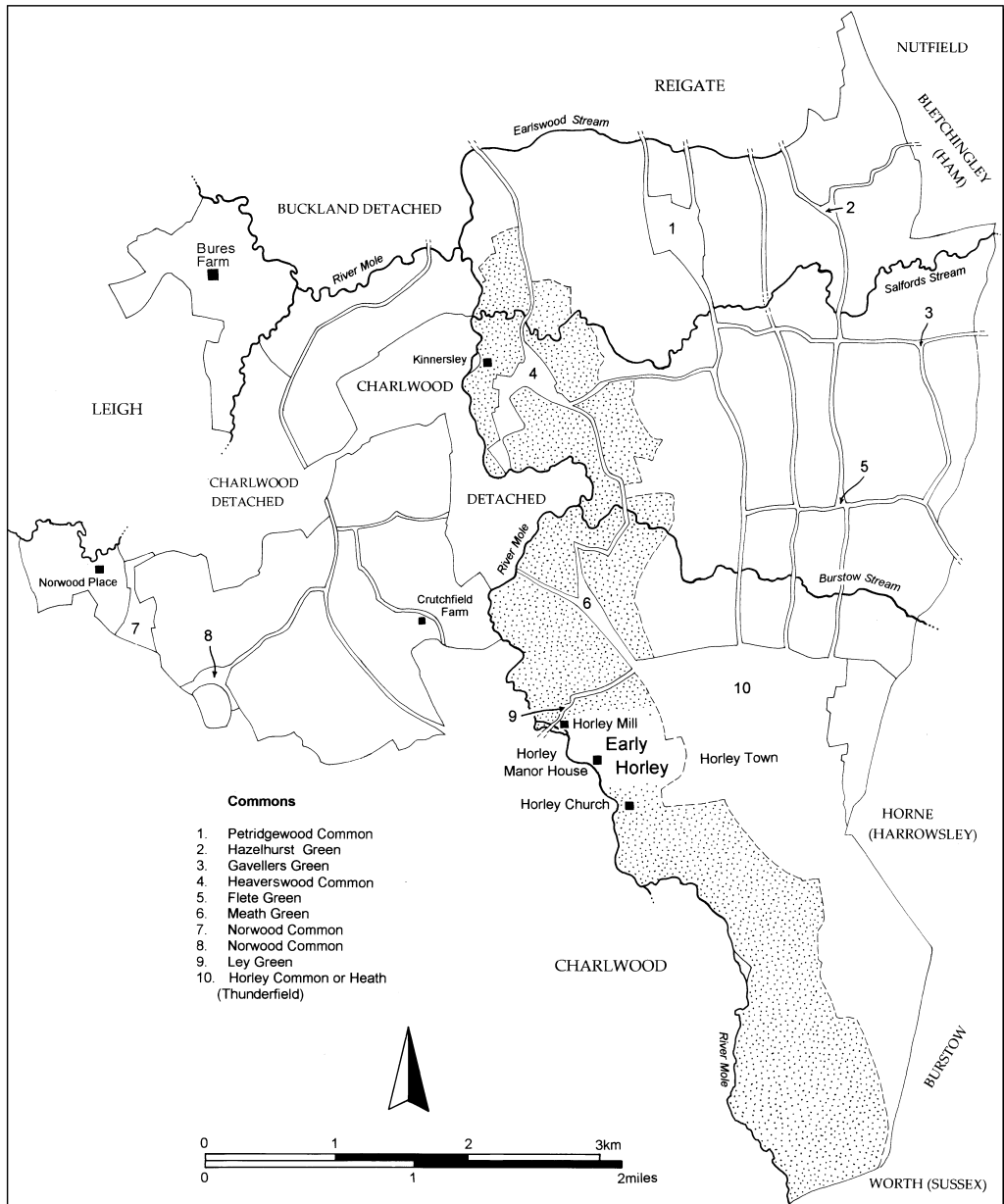
Fig 1 The ancient parish of Horley and its commons. The modern town lies to the east of 'early Horley' situated
       at the centre of the former denn (stippled) of Chertsey Abbey's estate of Sutton. Parish boundary as from
       Horley tithe map, 1848.

subsequent readmission of the tenants at-will-by-indenture, were made at courts of the abbot
held 'at Horlee' in 1316.[6] The courthouse was almost certainly within, or in the curtilage of,
the demesne farm otherwise known as Horley manor house or Court Lodge Farm (figs 1 and
2) some 300m upstream from the mill. Not surprisingly then, the 'place' of Horley in the
13th and early 14th century appears to have centred on the mill and manor house but

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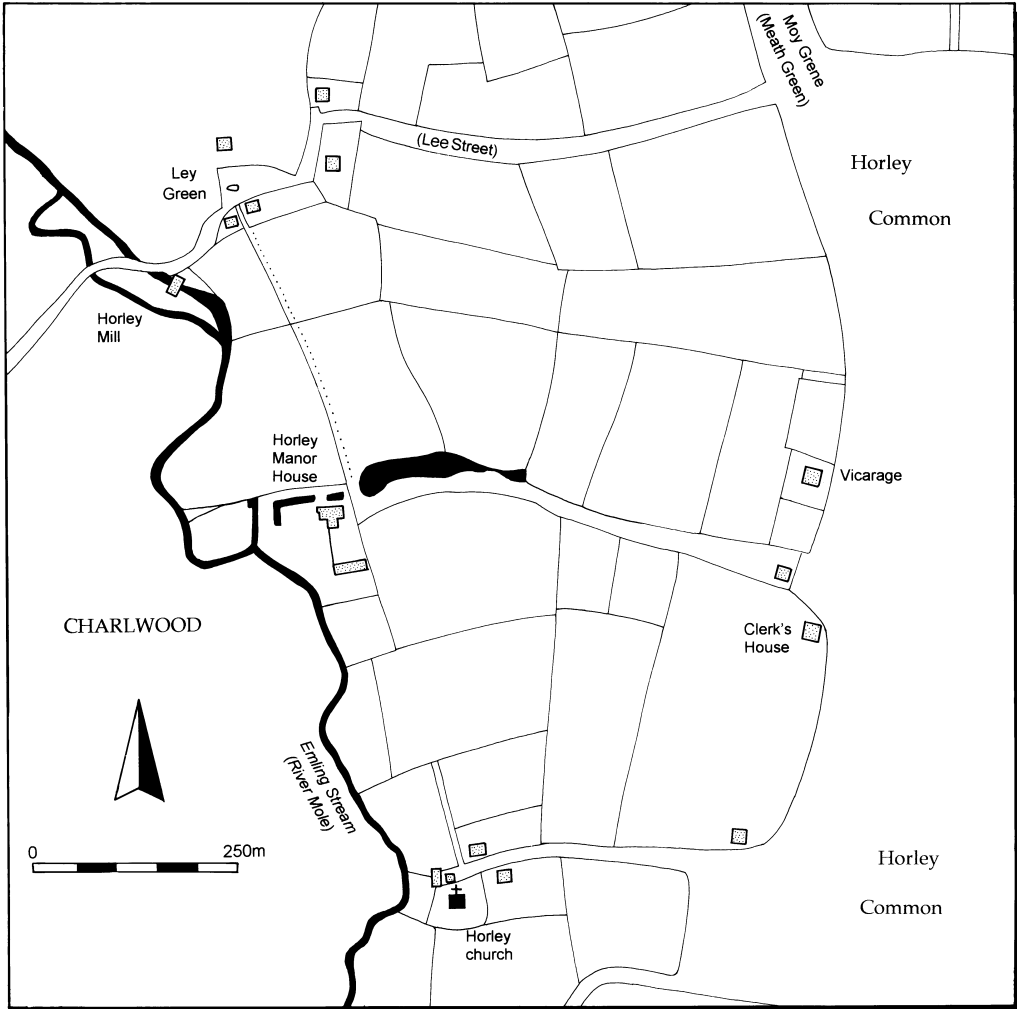
[6] *Cartularies*, **II** (1): li, ci, 1122–41.

Fig 2 'Early Horley', based on part of the map of Horley parish in 1602 by Ralph Treswell (SHC: Z22; original in the Guildhall Library, London).

probably also included other important buildings nearby: the vicarage, the clerk's house and indeed the parish church (fig 2).

While there is nothing new in this suggested location of 'early Horley'[7] there have been no written attempts at pinpointing the source of the place-name *Horley*, the meaning of which, and thus a clue to its whereabouts, remains dependent on the expertise of place-name scholars (see below). That source was a landscape feature apparently used to identify an original settlement that probably lay within the area defined as 'early Horley' but preceded the building of its major structures including the church and manor house. The evidence of a church at Horley in 1086[8] would indicate that the settlement was established at some time before that date and had replaced a seasonal use of the area by herdsmen on the Wealden

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[7] eg Chouler 1976, 11.

[8] Domesday Book lists two churches for Sutton, one at Sutton and the other almost certainly identifiable with the parish church of Horley sited on Sutton's denn. There is no other candidate for the second church (Blair 1991, 52 and 114).

denn of Chertsey Abbey's estate of Sutton.[9] The denn abutted the eastern side of the Mole from the Sussex border on the south to Reigate lands on the north (fig 1) and, by coincidence or not, 'early Horley' was to be situated more or less at its centre.[10]

Original Horley

It would seem probable then that an original settlement called *Horley*, or the like, appeared at some time in the 11th century. But why was it so named? The early recorded spellings, from the late 12th century to *c* 1300, are shared between variants of *Horley* and *Hornley*, the earliest being *Hornleya* in 1175.[11] In 1934 the English Place-Name Society (EPNS) suggested that the name is a compound of *leah* and *horn*. Rejecting *horn*, 'projecting piece of land', as descriptive of the somewhat featureless ground in the Horley area, the editors decided that the name more probably denoted *leah*, 'woodland or clearing', once belonging to Horne.[12] Unfortunately, this seems most unlikely as Horne, if not a personal name, had no tenurial connections with Horley and indeed, in 1086, was subordinate to Chivington and, like Horley, was wood-pasture in the early stages of settlement.[13]

In 1982 Jeremy Greenwood attempted to redress the situation by stating that the early spelling *Hornley* was a clerical error and should have been written OE *Horuley*, 'clearing in the dirt', as an accurate description of the Horley district, an area of river gravel surrounded by Wealden clay.[14] This interpretation was followed by the present author in 1997, suggesting 'muddy woodland' to describe wood-pasture in the process of being converted to mixed farming.[15] A re-examination of Greenwood's statement however reveals that his argument that *Hornley* was a clerical error founders on the evidence that the spelling remained in intermittent use until as late as the 15th century.[16] It is probable that scribes were writing down the place-name as it was heard, *Hornley* and *Horley* being used indiscriminately with the latter probably a contraction of the former. A similar process seems to have occurred with Horley in Oxfordshire, which was *Hornelie* in 1086.[17]

The received wisdom repeated above leaves one with the feeling that the meaning of *Horley/Hornley* in Surrey is very much unresolved. All is not lost however. Turning to the most up-to-date information on the EPNS website, the meaning now given is 'Horn-shaped wood/clearing' with the original 'Horne's wood/clearing' retained as an alternative.[18] The first choice is certainly worthy of a more detailed discussion especially as there is a growing appreciation that *leah* may originally have conveyed the meaning 'wood-pasture' rather than the irreconcilable 'wood or clearing'.[19] It may even be suggested that the term originally

[9]   *Ibid*, 52; Ellaby 2004, 89.
[10] The extent of the denn is estimated from rentals and property transactions in *Cartularies*, **II** (1): 876, and 1114–86, *passim*; Ingram & Carter [nd], *passim*. As well as being at the centre of Sutton's denn, 'early Horley' possibly contained the best land for agriculture, lying on the Low Terrace of the river. The terrace also gave protection from flooding: the manor house, church and the hamlet of Lee Street were all sited on the terrace edge, the church on a slight eminence perhaps for enhanced visibility in this extremely flat land (fig 3. Reproduced from a photograph in Phillips 1885, unpaginated).
[11] Holzmann 1930, 406.
[12] Gover *et al* 1934, 292. It may be suggested that the place-name Horne itself is derived from the horn-shaped projection on the eastern side of the parish boundary: see map in Blair 1980, 107; 1991, 32. Since writing this note it has come to my notice that Uvedale Lambert (1921, 30) reached the same conclusion.
[13] Blair 1991, 22 and 53–4.
[14] Greenwood 1982. A similar meaning, 'dirty clearing', is given for Horleigh Green (*Horleye*, 1288) in East Sussex (Mawer & Stenton 1930, 382).
[15] Ellaby 1997.
[16] Gover *et al* 1934, 292.
[17] Domesday Book.
[18] http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/ins/kepn/ (Accessed 13 August 2009).
[19] Gelling 1997, 126 and especially Hooke 1998, 145–8. See also Smith 2005, 17.

meant 'common wood-pasture', particularly in the Weald, which is generally accepted as being common pasture in the early Anglo-Saxon period and which was known as *Andredesleage* in 477.[20] From around the 8th century however this vast pastureland was largely enclosed and parcelled out as privatised wood-pastures in the form of 'denns' or 'folds' but as a legacy of the old system a scatter of commons remained across the landscape, some of which survive in part today. Further residual pastures appeared from around the 11th century when the denns themselves were enclosed for agriculture and it may be argued that some at least were deliberate creations for the benefit of settlers. Many of these Wealden commons were probably given *leah* names in their early history, but the meaning of the term appears to have become forgotten and from about the 14th century it became fashionable to re-name them as 'greens', 'heaths' or 'commons'. With this re-naming however some of the pastures retained relics of their old appellations, eg Harrowsley Green (*Herewoldesle*, *c* 1220), Blindley Heath (?*Lindelegh*, 1313) and Cranleigh Common (*Cranelega*, 1166).[21]

The parish of Horley had several greens, heaths and commons but, apart from remnants of Petridgewood Common, they succumbed to enclosure over the centuries. A few probably went unrecorded but many can still be identified (fig 1) from tithe, estate and enclosure maps and others inferred from place-names mentioned in the abuttals of ancient property transactions.[22] Their very presence makes the latest EPNS meaning of *Horley/Hornley* a real possibility but where was this 'horn-shaped wood/clearing' or, in the light of the above discussion, 'horn-shaped common'? If it is accepted that the original *Horley/Hornley* was somewhere in the vicinity of the mill and manor house then that is the place to look. Indeed, until enclosure in the 19th century, this area did include three commons (fig 1), one of which was situated near the mill while the others – Meath Green and Horley Common – may be regarded as somewhat peripheral. The latter, formerly known as Thunderfield (*þunresfeld*, 'open space of Thunor'),[23] was probably named as such from its inception, possibly around the 8th century, to describe an extensive and relatively treeless common adjacent to woodland with recent pagan associations.[24] If a settlement that was to be located nearby should take its name from this pasture then that name would surely have been Thunderfield even if one can optimistically see the common as 'horn-shaped'.

Meath Green, a northward projection of Thunderfield, is first recorded as Muthgrene *c* 1350. The EPNS gives the first element as OE *ge(myðe)*, 'junction of two streams', referring to the Burstow stream joining the Mole more than 400m to the north.[25] This seems too distant however to allow such a derivation and it may therefore be suggested that the simpler OE/ME *muth*, 'mouth' is more appropriate, as a valid description of the common at its northern extremity (fig 1). Perhaps as confirmation, analysis of Chertsey Abbey deeds of 1440 reveal that Gilbert at Muthe had held a messuage and three crofts within this 'mouth' and abutting Muthelane, ie the western extension of the common.[26] This land, together with further fields abutting the west side of the common, was known as Muthelond and, totalling 71 acres, was one of the original bond tenements recovered by John de Rutherwick from freeholders in 1316, in this instance William de Burstowe. Gilbert at Muthe was an earlier tenant who had held the property in bondage, or villeinage, apparently long before the abbot's intervention.[27] From its shape, and the knowledge that the name Muthe attached to the

[20] Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.
[21] Gover *et al* 1934: 293, 317 and 229.
[22] Omitted from the list is the estate of Kinnersley (fig 1. *Cyneheard's leah*: Gover *et al* 1934, 42 and 294; Smith 2005, 23). The name was almost certainly imported by a branch of the de Kinnersley family who held estates in Horley and Carshalton from the mid-13th century and whose origins were probably Kinnersley in the Welsh marches (Meekings & Shearman 1968, xxxv).
[23] Gover *et al* 1934, 292.
[24] Ellaby 2004, 90.
[25] Gover *et al* 1934, 295.
[26] *Cartularies*, **II** (1): 1185–6.
[27] *Ibid*, 1122–3, 1178.

common well before 1316, there can be no suggestion that this pasture gave rise to the place-name *Horley/Hornley*.

The third common, Ley Green, a little to the north-east of Horley Mill (figs 1 and 2), appears by name on only one map, the Christ's Hospital map of Horley, 1602 (fig 2). It is depicted on the enclosure and tithe maps of 1812 and 1848 respectively,[28] but had disappeared by the time of the OS 25-inch map in 1870. Early documentation is sparse and only 'at la Lee' in 1391[29] and the names John at Lye in 1314 and William de la Leye *c* 1400[30] are probable references to the common. The dearth of literature relating to Ley Green can be explained by the observation that it formed part of the well-documented Lee Street (fig 2), an appellation presumably derived from the green and the straggling group of dwellings around it. It is Lee Street today, le Leestret (1397),[31] le strete (1440)[32] and frequently Lestrete or Lestreete throughout the court rolls (1562–1729) of Horley manor[33] where it appears within a tithing of that name.[34] In contrast with the other three tithings of the manor, where habitation was generally of a more dispersed character, Lee Street tithing comprised the manor house and mill and, as mentioned above, a group of dwellings, or hamlet, in close association with Ley Green. Hamlets attached to commons often have a long history and many appear to have originated in the late Anglo-Saxon period in areas of former wood-pasture and this possibly reflects the importance of residual grazing areas.[35] Ley Green seems to fit such a scenario and, as suggested earlier, may have been a deliberate creation for the benefit of settlers when the central part of Sutton's denn was enclosed for agriculture. It may be argued then that the hamlet around Ley Green, clearly demonstrated from the 14th century onwards, originated as a common-side settlement before Domesday. The tiny common was undeniably horn-shaped (fig 2) and it may be that the first settlers around it used this feature to identify their location as at *Hornley*, 'horn-shaped common'. The little hamlet appears however never to have grown in size and importance and the name soon became attached to a wider area that included the adjacent, and probably later, administrative centre around the church and manor house.[36] Possibly to avoid confusion, the common and hamlet appear to have become simply 'the *leah*' and from around the 15th or 16th centuries Ley Green and Lee Street respectively.

Discussion

If it is correct that the original *Hornley* was a small hamlet associated with the later Ley Green and that it appeared at some time before Domesday, then what was its *raison d'être*? The classic explanation would be that it represents an early form of Wealden settlement where the inhabitants were associated with the conversion of wood-pasture to farmland and its subsequent maintenance. Little, however, is known about settlements of this period and for this reason the literature is both meagre and tentative. John Blair suggests a two-tier system whereby villeins occupied and farmed isolated severalties while bordars/cottars lived in servile nucleated communities. In the east Surrey Weald the former can perhaps be identified with some at least of the scattered farmsteads on the Wealden clay at Nutfield and the latter with the Domesday reference to one plough and five bordars in Horne.[37] Inhabitants at *Hornley*

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[28] Copies of enclosure and tithe maps in Horley library.
[29] *CACRA:* 1163.
[30] Gover *et al* 1934, 295.
[31] *CACRA:* 1831.
[32] *Cartularies,* **II** (1): 1186.
[33] Originally the Chertsey Abbey lands of Sutton and Coulsdon in Horley.
[34] Ingram & Carter [nd], *passim*.
[35] Hooke 1998, 221.
[36] Moss 1967. The earliest pottery sherds recovered during excavations on the site of the manor house in the 1960s were dated to *c* 1100.
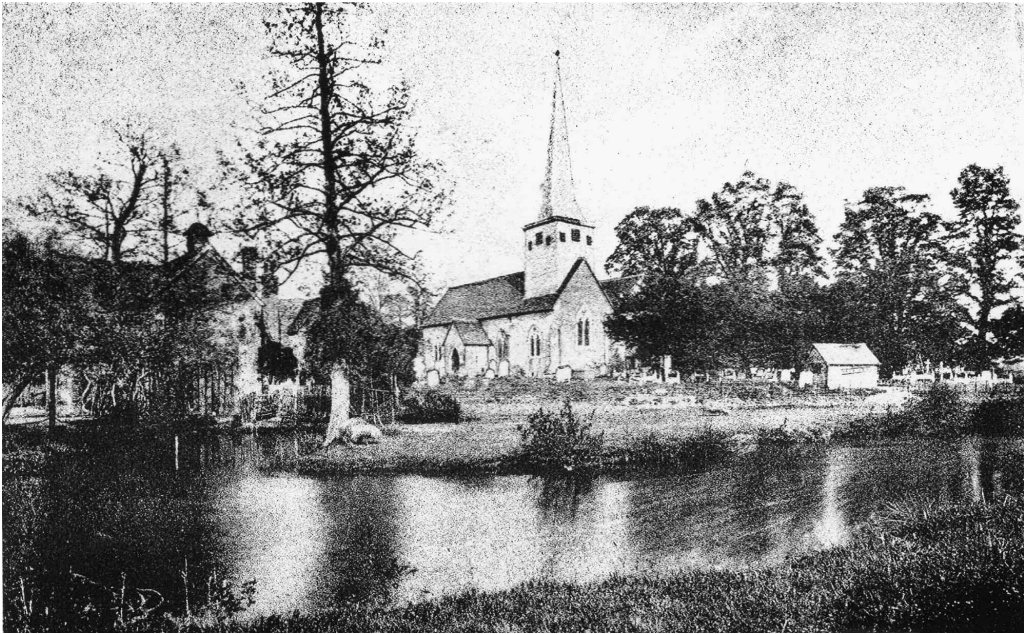[37] Blair 1991, 53–4.

Fig 3 Horley church (from the west) on the edge of the Low Terrace of the river Mole *c* 1885.

may or may not be subsumed in the Domesday entry for Sutton where 21 villeins and four cottagers were recorded.

The history of the Ley Green or Lee Street hamlet suggests that its houses were of little or no more than cottage status and this could imply that its origins lay with a servile nucleated community. The five dwellings around the green as depicted on the 1602 map (fig 2) have survived in part to the present day and were probably built in the 15th and 16th centuries.[38] None can be described as grand. All of them, together with the mill house and manor house, were assessed for the Hearth Tax in 1664 and comprised 'Leigh Street' tithing. Excluding the manor house, with six hearths, they were charged at a mean rate of 1.83 hearths per building, the lowest of the seven districts assessed in Horley parish.[39] Analysis of the views of frankpledge in the court rolls reveals an ever-changing list of residents' surnames in Lee Street that also suggests occupancy of cottages by semi-itinerant labourers, husbandmen and artisans.

The cottages around the green stood on little copyhold properties of 3 acres or less and their names can be traced through court rolls, rentals and other documents back to tenants in the 14th century or earlier.[40] Horley manor copyholds were formerly known as villein, bond or serf lands and it was on some of these that cottages were built seemingly as a condition by the lord (the abbot of Chertsey) on the admittance of a new tenant.[41] The properties around Ley Green certainly fell into this category and appear to have been specifically allocated for the purpose of cottage sites. In 1391, 'at la Lee' in Horley, John at Felde and Matilda his wife were admitted 'to place of serf-land' 3 perches by 2 perches surrendered by William his brother on condition that 'a suitable house or place' be built by the following

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[38] Brown *et al* 1997, 149–51.
[39] Meekings 1940, xcvi.
[40] Clockwise from the cottage on the north edge of the green (fig 2): Feldelond and Lelonde; Gilberts Haw; Notts; Masons; Thedoms.
[41] *CACRA:* 1163, 1831.

Michaelmas.[42] This house plot was probably on the north side of Ley Green approximating to the cottage shown on the 1602 map and within lands called Feldelonde and Lelonde in 1440.[43] An ancestor of John, another John at Felde, had held the property in 1316 when recovered from freehold tenancy and returned to villeinage status by the abbot of Chertsey as '2 acres of land with 2 houses built thereon at 8d rent'.[44] A rental of 1496 mentions the property again as '1 cottage with other lands of John Ryse formerly of John at Felde at 8d rent'.[45]

It may be significant that the property recovered by the abbot had been held freely by tenants 'there occupied for long times and from tenants to tenants' and 'which William le Hore formerly held in villeinage of the predecessors of the aforesaid Abbot'.[46] In other words, this cottage site had been in existence for a very long time before 1316. The plot to the north-east of Feldelond and Lelonde (fig 2) had a similar history. Known as Gilbert's Haw through the court rolls and rentals, and now occupied by the 15th century cottage called Old House, it was recovered by the abbot in 1316 as 'that ½ rood of land with a house built thereon' and returned to villeinage status that Gilbert at Muthe had once enjoyed.[47] Immediately east of Gilbert's Haw was a plot of land called Edmonds[48] recovered by the abbot in 1316 from the freehold tenant Roger Edmond and, like Feldelonde and Lelonde, was formerly held in villeinage by William le Hore.[49] A descendent, John Edmond, was admitted and ordered, in 1397, to build a house within 2 years on his land 'next le Leestret in Horley in bondage'.[50] No cottage however is depicted on the 1602 map.

There are therefore a number of cottage plots around Ley Green that can be demonstrated to have been in existence at a very early stage in Horley's history. Their holding by villein tenants, who no doubt lived elsewhere, and the construction of cottages thereon for subordinate peasants at the behest of the lord, seems to hark back to even earlier times, quite possibly to the origins of Horley when a labour force was required to open up the centre of Sutton's wood-pasture for farming. The cottagers, although probably not possessing any large beasts of their own, seemingly still had some grazing rights and the provision by the lord of a small horn-shaped common as the focal point of their servile community was deemed adequate for the pasturing of a goat or two and a few domestic fowl.

Endnote

This paper was conceived and largely written before the publication of the Surrey Archaeological Research Framework.[51] It does, however, retrospectively touch upon some of the gaps in our knowledge concerning late Saxon and early medieval settlement in the Weald, land use, commons and place-names.[52] Interpretation of place-names is rightly noted as being a very specialised field of study,[53] but while the meaning of a place-name should generally be left to the experts there is still a case for people with detailed local knowledge to propose, where appropriate, alternative views. Indeed, as here, it can only be local knowledge that is key to pinpointing suggested sources of topographical place-names.

[42] *Ibid,* 1163.
[43] *Cartularies,* **II** (1): 1186.
[44] *Ibid,* 1138/9.
[45] *Ibid,* 876.
[46] *Ibid,* 1122, 1138/9.
[47] *Ibid,* 1136/7.
[48] *Ibid,* 1186; Ingram & Carter [nd], *passim.*
[49] *Cartularies,* **II** (1): 1128/9.
[50] *CACRA:* 1831.
[51] Bird 2006.
[52] *Ibid,* 50–60.
[53] *Ibid,* 51.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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