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978-0-521-07824-5 - The Domesday Geography of South-East England

Edited by H. C. Darby and Eila M. J. Campbell

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THE DOMESDAY GEOGRAPHY OF
SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND

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Portion of left-hand column of folio 136b of the Domesday Book (same size as original). Reproduced by courtesy of the Public Record Office. For extension and translation, see pp. 619-20.

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THE
DOMESDAY GEOGRAPHY
OF
SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND

EDITED BY

H. C. DARBY

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AND

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A century hence the student's materials will not be in the shape in which he finds them now. In the first place, the substance of Domesday Book will have been rearranged. Those villages and hundreds which the Norman clerks tore into shreds will have been reconstituted and pictured in maps, for many men from over all England will have come within King William's spell, will have bowed themselves to him and become that man's men.

From the concluding paragraph of F. W. MAITLAND'S
Domesday Book and Beyond (Cambridge, 1897)

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PREFACE

This book is the third of a number covering the whole of Domesday England, and it is built upon the same plan as the *Domesday Geography of the Eastern Counties*, first published in 1952. The greater part of the preface to that volume is equally relevant to this one, and its argument must be repeated here. The Domesday Book has long been regarded as a unique source of information about legal and economic matters, but its bearing upon the reconstruction of the geography of England during the early Middle Ages has remained comparatively neglected. The extraction of this geographical information is not always as simple as it might appear to be from a casual inspection of the Domesday folios. Not only are there general problems of interpretation, but almost every county has its own peculiarities. There is, moreover, the sheer difficulty of handling the vast mass of material, and of getting a general view of the whole. The original survey was made in terms of manors, villages and hundreds, but the clerks reassembled the information under the headings of the different land-holders of each county. Their work must therefore be undone, and the survey set out upon a geographical basis.

The information that such an analysis makes available is of two kinds. In the first place, the details about plough-teams and about population enable a general picture of the relative prosperity of different areas to be obtained. In the second place, the details about such things as meadow, pasture, wood and salt-pans serve to illustrate further the local variations both in the face of the countryside and in its economic life. An attempt has been made to set out this variety of information as objectively as possible in the form of maps and tables. When all the maps have been drawn and all the tables compiled, we may begin to have a clearer idea of both the value and the limitations of the survey that has so captured the imagination of later generations.

But great though the bulk of the Domesday Book is, it is only a summary. The making of it not only omitted much, but has, too often, resulted in obscurity. No one works for long on the text before discovering how fascinating and tantalising that obscurity is. In reflecting over many Domesday entries we have been reminded, time and again, of some remarks in Professor Trevelyan's inaugural lecture at Cambridge in

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PREFACE

1927: 'On the shore where Time casts up its stray wreckage, we gather corks and broken planks, whence much indeed may be argued and more guessed; but what the great ship was that has gone down into the deep, that we shall never see.' The scene that King William's clerks looked upon has gone, and the most we can do is to try to obtain some rough outline of its lineaments; this chapter in the history of the English landscape can only be a very imperfect one.

The Domesday Geography of Eastern England contained an introductory chapter which is not included here. Amongst other things that chapter explained that the counties are considered separately and that the treatment of each follows a more or less standard pattern. This method inevitably involves some repetition, but, after experiment, it was chosen because of its convenience. It enables the account of each county to be read or consulted apart from the rest, and it also has the advantage of bringing out the peculiar features that characterise the text of each county. For although the Domesday Book is arranged on a more or less uniform plan, there are many differences between the counties, both in the nature of their information and in the way it is presented. The relevance of each of the items to a reconstruction of Domesday geography is examined, and any peculiar features that occur in the phrasing of the Domesday text are also noted. All the standard maps have been reproduced on the same scale to facilitate comparison between one county and another. A final chapter sums up some of the salient features of the Domesday geography of the south-eastern counties as a whole. The treatment of the statistics for the boroughs is different from that in the earlier two volumes (see pp. 585–6 and 618 below), but this does not appreciably affect the maps.

The maps in this volume have been drawn by Mr G. R. Versey, but this is only a part of our debt to him. At all stages of the work he has helped to check the material and has given much general assistance. For help from time to time we are grateful to Sir Frank Stenton and Professor V. H. Galbraith. To our five fellow contributors we owe warm thanks for their courtesy and patience, and especially to Mr R. Welldon Finn for his comments on the proof of the whole book. Our debt to the officials of the Cambridge University Press is also great.

H. C. DARBY

EILA M. J. CAMPBELL

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
LONDON*St Swithin's Day, 1961*

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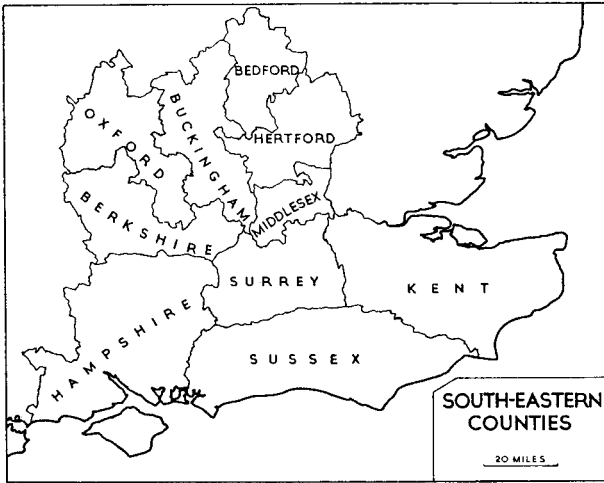


Fig. 1. South-eastern Counties.