

‘DEVOTION TO THE UNCOVERING AND RECORDING OF A
NATION’S LANGUAGE AND A CITY’S ANTIQUITIES’:
THE LIFE OF WILLIAM SOMNER OF CANTERBURY
(1606-1669). PART I

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It is appropriate 350 years after his death that this paper (to be published over two volumes) reviews the achievements of this celebrated Canterbury antiquarian, a fervent Royalist living in traumatic times. He seldom left, or was even far from, the cathedral and its environs during a life of prodigious legal and scholarly activity. He is little read today though he scaled noble heights with his Antiquities of Canterbury of 1640 and the ground-breaking Anglo-Saxon-Latin-English Dictionarium of 1659; and, a year later, A Treatise of Gavelkind.

Despite his high standing in seventeenth-century scholarship, various matters have militated against the modern biographer, chiefly the destruction of his papers in the cathedral Audit House fire of 1670 and further losses occasioned by the June 1942 air-raid. But some correspondence with like-minded friends and scholars is available, along with a considerable quantity of workaday documents from his notarial and cathedral employments, and also manuscripts and printed books from his personal library. Bishop White Kennett’s Life of Somner published only a generation after its subject’s death provides the only near-contemporary account but has serious shortcomings as a biography.

William Somner senior, the father of the antiquary, would be the first of several generations of his family to live in Canterbury. In a deposition of September 1622¹ he had been a registrar in Canterbury for 33 years and was aged 50, living at the *Sign of the Sun*, having inhabited St Alphege parish for four or five years two decades previously. In another deposition of February 1626² he claimed to have been born at Boxley but resident in the city for 36 years, this fact further confirmed in his will of 1637 when leaving 20s. to the poor of Boxley parish ‘where I was born’ and 20s. to the poor of Detling parish ‘where I was bred up many years’.³ His baptism as one of at least five siblings is recorded at Boxley in 1572 as is the marriage of his parents, David Sumner (*sic*) and Alice Reeve, in 1562.

On 6 September 1591, soon after arrival into St Margaret’s parish in Canterbury, he was admitted to exercise the office of notary public⁴ for a fee of 13s. 4d., and now started his legal career in the city at the age of 19. A future prerogative was

that he would now enjoy devising and using his own notarial sign. Previously under the aegis of the pope, these were licensed from 1534 by the archbishop of Canterbury ‘to accepte take and recorde the knowledge of contractes’. Every notary would, in theory, devise his own unique design, often a cross on a stepped basis including his name; but if the document was in Latin he would additionally invent a uniquely shaped capital ‘E’ of the accompanying *Et Ego* clause which attested and authenticated what was written alongside.

On 22 October 1594, he was married by licence to Ann Wynstone of Maidstone (c.1574-1637). In a deposition of 1624 she claimed to be about 50, born at Lynsted,

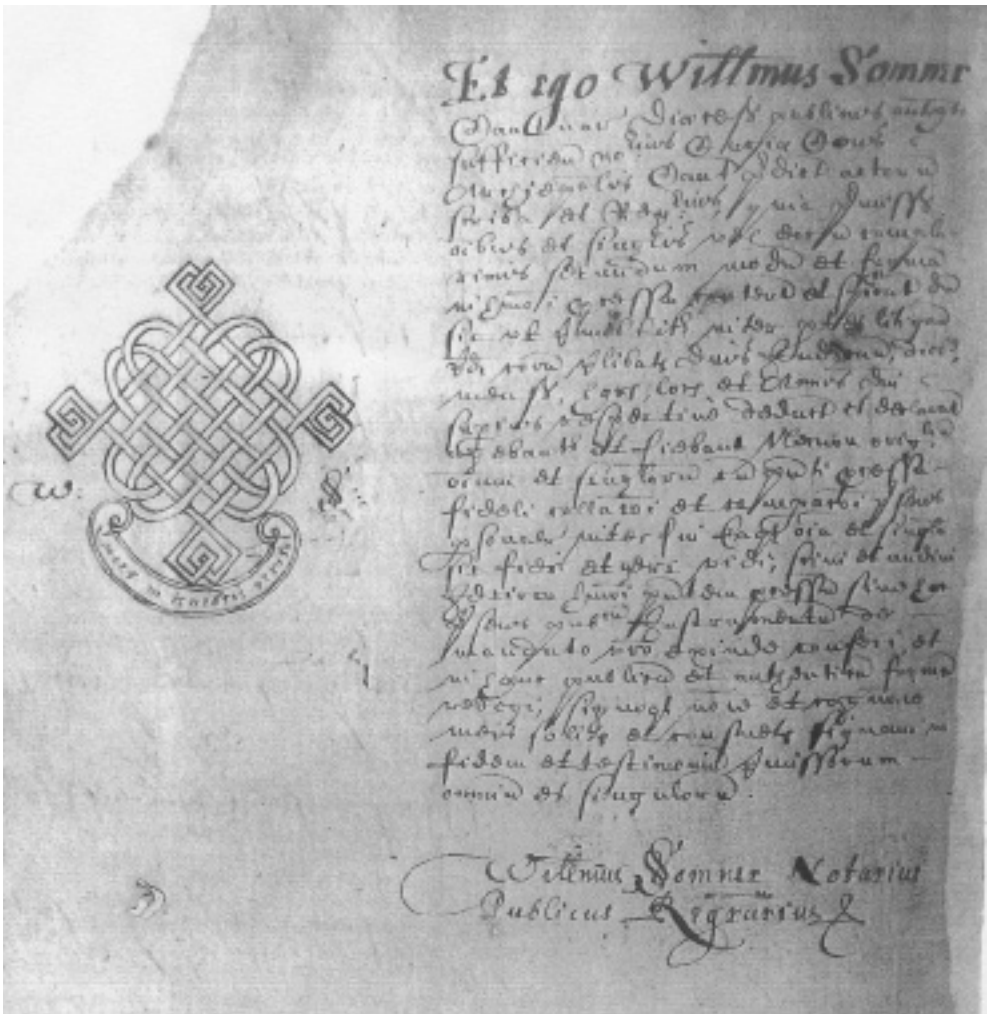


Fig. 1 Notarial sign of William Somner, senior, Notary Public, with attestation written out in the hand of his son and assistant, William Somner, junior, Notary Public, the antiquary. (Reproduced by kind permission of Canterbury Cathedral Archives.)

and made her mark instead of signing.⁵ Her parentage is unconfirmed although there is a will of a Giles Winstone of St Alphege parish proved in 1602/3⁶ where one of the witnesses is William Somner senior, perhaps acting for his father-in-law.

Both of the future family homes would be in the very centre of the city and highly convenient for his several emoluments, for he was apprenticed to lawyers in the Consistory Court of Canterbury, served a seven-year apprenticeship to a senior proctor, proceeded to registrar and was then admitted proctor on 7 June 1597.⁷ From 1597 he acted as deputy to the registrar Francis Aldriche until the latter's death in 1602; on 6 November 1610 he was appointed joint-registrar⁸ with notary public Humphrey Clerck, seemingly until at least 1614. His last day in office was 3 July 1638, about six weeks before he died, when William junior was appointed deputy registrar to take his father's place until at least 1643.⁹

The first two of seven children were baptised to him and his wife at the city church of St Margaret, then three more in the early 1600s at St Alphege when the family lived in a building with the *Sign of the Sun*, whose wooden structure was still standing around the 1970s in Sun Yard in Sun Street¹⁰ just off Palace Street in a parish which had long housed lawyers and other city luminaries. William Somner senior then returned to St Margaret's parish, probably in late 1605, and moved into the present 5 Castle St, then at the *Sign of the Crown*; the house was far more unusual, and perhaps almost unique, in lying in the three city parishes of St Margaret, St Mary de Castro and St Mildred.

Such a long parochial residence ensured that after the burial of William Somner senior at St Margaret's church on 28 August 1638 a legacy of £10 was given to 'twenty honest labourers, poor people, the eldest and most needy of the parish of St Margaret and St Mildred'. His daughter Elizabeth (*sic*) Ely received a feather bedstead and £100 'for her long pains taken with her parents'. Further customary bequests included £10 each to sundry children, £5 to every grandchild, and 30s. apiece to the principal family mourners for rings.

Early life and the beginnings of scholarship

William Somner the antiquary was the sixth of his father's seven children, and was born in the family home at the present 5 Castle Street, a pleasing Georgianised and jettied double-fronted house displaying today an appropriate small commemorative plaque on the façade. The long-held story that a certificate from St Margaret's church made under the hand of Thomas Johnson giving his date of baptism as 5 November 1598 can no longer be countenanced as the said note has not survived and there is no corresponding entry in the contemporary parochial annual returns (the surviving original registers open only in 1653). It is perhaps likely that this baptism related to a boy who died as an infant, and we are therefore on much surer ground with the antiquary's own memorial inscription in St Margaret's church (reproduced in the 1726 second edition of *A Treatise of Gavelkind*) which gives his date of birth as 30 March 1606 and that of death as 30 March 1669, his sixty-third birthday. These dates were confirmed by his widow and son 'who report it from tradition, and some better grounds'.¹¹

But Somner himself is the best person to tell us his age, and he does so several times. In that same volume of *Gavelkind* one Samuel Norris, deputy registrar,

auditor and chapter clerk, penned a marginal note in 1739 that, according to Somner himself, at two separate depositions in 1626, he was ‘almost nineteen a little before Lady Day’ and ‘about 19 soon after Lady Day’.¹² And in a further deposition of 15 January 1663/4 Somner declared that he was born in Canterbury, had lived there *ab incunabulis*, and was then 56 and over.¹³

He grew up no doubt under the keen eye of his father who saw in him a son after his own heart and mind to be groomed as a future man of the law, but one who would concomitantly develop future literary and antiquarian interests of a remarkable order. Of these latter skills there is no evidence of them in William senior or of their encouragement in his son, who was doubtless left to pursue them as best he could in whatever free time was available to him. An atmosphere of ecclesiastical law would have surrounded him as the house in Castle Street was not only his father’s home but also a centre of diocesan business where Somner senior would execute wills, attend to clients’ other business and much else.

After probable early tuition at a private school, he was elected a King’s School scholar in 1615 at the age of eight and educated under the formidable headmaster John Ludd. Here, surely, were inculcated the seeds of an initial attraction to antiquity. But no university education was to follow as the young boy probably left formal education at about fourteen to be apprenticed to his father: the King’s School (then known as the ‘Free School’) would remain as Somner’s only educational establishment, and indeed one which, as White Kennett observed in his biography, he constantly endeavoured to advance the interest and honour of ‘to as high a pitch as when he himself was a member of it’. Future lifelong antiquarian friends from those schooldays included Peter Gunning who went off to Clare Hall, Cambridge, was later Bishop of Ely, and another ardent royalist. As his father had probably bought his own position and intended to pass it to the young son, he remained at home to be apprenticed as a law clerk in his father’s office.¹⁴ No travelling was necessary as the court archives were kept in the house, an easily accessible fund of information for current cases as well as precedent, and doubtless a rich bed in which many seeds for the future antiquary would germinate.

Every ecclesiastical lawyer would, with luck and diligence, become a notary public. Somner rose thus far although there is no surviving record of his admission; however, on 3 April 1623, when just seventeen, he gave evidence in a case where he styled himself *Notarius Publicus*.¹⁵ Now, and later when further appointed by the archbishop as registrar to the Canterbury ecclesiastical courts, his extensive practice meant that he would be in demand to exercise his skills in drawing up notarial instruments (on which he might add his individual notarial sign) and to take evidence in cases of international law as well as in the mass of more humdrum cases in which the church courts still interfered to an unseemly degree in ordinary people’s private lives – and where a notary’s word counted for that of two ordinary witnesses. Typically, on 1 January 1625/6, Somner, with his tidy legal mind, commenced a precedent book which he would continue for most of his life;¹⁶ in it one may examine hundreds of written-up cases, often neatly subdivided into a dozen or so paragraphs, and reflect on his daily business of recording the peccadilloes of ordinary mortals concerning marriage licences, house dilapidations, probate disputes, crimes, profanations, witness bonds and much else, the daily bread-and-butter of a city lawyer in the mid-seventeenth century. All of this work, much of it

of a nature now undertaken by the modern civil courts, proceeded in tandem with his offices of agent to the Dean and Chapter and supervisor of the city archives.

In return, Archbishop Laud expended time and money over the antiquarian collections in making them available to the public, no doubt assisted by Somner who was by now not only diligent in his legal duties but fostering great interests in the study of antiquities. Walks around the cathedral to seek out genealogies, examining the city buildings and churches, reading classical writers in manuscript or print, and no doubt keeping a watchful eye on local excavations and the coins and relics which might appear from them meant that Somner had very little time for any unrelated matters – antiquarianism was by now a consuming passion and one which would soon reap fulsome dividends. Pride in the city, its history and antiquities meant that even as a young man he was evidently fascinated by Canterbury – the huge cathedral, the abbey, the mediaeval gateways, the many parish churches, the castle – all grist to the future antiquary’s fertile and curious mind; and indeed Somner remains famous for having acted as a quasi-tourist guide in showing interested guests and visitors around the streets and buildings of his cathedral city.

At the age of 28 he was married at Canterbury Cathedral on 12 June 1634 to Elizabeth (*b.* 1599) the daughter of William Thurgar of Teversham, Cambridgeshire, and had issue:

1. Francis (born and died 1635).
2. Ann (1637-1679) who married Richard Pising (*d.* 1675), chief lay clerk at the cathedral, initially a goldsmith but then a registrar in the city’s consistory court, a position probably obtained by family connections. But here was no favourite son-in-law, for in his will¹⁷ Somner stipulated that if Pising should return to Canterbury and resume goldsmithing then the £100 due to him from the succeeding registrar should be forfeit and devolve to Somner’s own wife and children. Many years later the three Pising children, Ann, William and Richard, petitioned¹⁸ that they had been rendered poor orphans by being deprived of certain properties in the precincts (bequeathed to them by their great-uncle John Somner, brother of the antiquary) by one Halden who had married the widow of John’s son George.
3. Elizabeth (1639-?1728) who married firstly in 1675 John Lewkner, a hatter and haberdasher (*d.* 1684) and secondly John Boughton (?*d.* 1692), surgeon of Elham. Just a month after her first marriage, now with a new surname and in receipt of her father’s legacy of £250, she was involved in a dispute¹⁹ with her mother over her father’s will as her uncle John had taken on some duties of executorship without having been sworn, before renouncing in favour of Barbara Hannington, late Somner, her step-mother and the antiquary’s widow.
4. Mary (1641-?).

Somner and Laud

Somner’s continuing position within the cathedral would have depended to a considerable degree on his ongoing, friendly and increasingly close relationship with William Laud ‘by whose favour and goodness he subsisted in his place and profession’.²⁰ The archbishop influenced Somner’s development as a scholar, even if his patronage of learning was spoiled by a tactless and overbearing rule which in

no small measure contributed to political dissent. Between 1634 and 1636 Somner was ill-advisedly ordered by the archbishop to send articles and injunctions to the large French and Dutch congregations in the city whose troublesome non-conformity was an ongoing matter of dispute, and one which Laud would gratefully have seen exchanged for the state religion. At this time the foreign refugees numbered perhaps as many as a third of Canterbury's population of around 6,000, and, as they worshipped in the cathedral crypt, would have been only too well known through personal intercourse to Somner who was inevitably, and publicly, charged by the foreign congregations as an accessory to their troubles, bearing calumny and persecution from the schismatics as one of 'Laud's creatures'. Against the majority feeling, a commission was set up which included Dean John Bargrave, Meric Casaubon and Sir Nathaniel Brent, all well known to Somner himself, and in whose own house on 19 December they met with the refugee church delegates. On that occasion Somner father and son were both present to examine documents and act as witnesses.

The relationship with Archbishop Laud manifested itself in various ways. Laud's encouragement of Somner's High-Church antiquarianism was naturally returned in mutual support for the Laudian movement and for the deep and ancient privileges of the church and its clergy. Somner's profound learning and knowledge of the diocese stood him in good stead when resolving questions relating to benefices, notably on one occasion at Hoath.²¹

The prelate was particularly concerned to discipline ministers who lived disorderly lives, and in 1636 had instructed his registrar to inform him about such cases in Canterbury diocese. In reply Somner sent the names of thirteen men in and around Canterbury whose main offences were that of 'playing the goodfellow' in taverns and drunkenness, a list which included as many as seven ministers from the thirteen city parishes.²²

Laud esteemed Somner for his knowledge of antiquities rather than his discharge of office, and on one occasion employed him in collecting for a consignment of 'choice and rare' manuscripts for onward transmission to the Bodleian library, at least eighty of which were purely on the subject of national antiquities. Kennett further considered it possible that Somner was employed in compiling a large vellum book on clergy details held at the Tower of London, *temp.* Edward I - Edward IV, which Laud had left in his Lambeth study for posterity.²³

When in 1637 the subject arose of the safety of the cathedral archives, Laud, surely mindful of the previous depredations on the archives wrought by Sir Edward Dering, asked for the dean's private door to the Treasury (where the archives were kept) to be fitted with two different locks in order that neither Dean Bargrave (who would in 1642 be arrested and imprisoned for his part in failing to stop the ransacking of the archives) nor the prebendaries could gain independent access. He added that the muniments should be inventoried, for 'they cannot be kept too safe', and brought down from the upper into the inner room of the Treasury, commenting:

And it is very fitting, upon this removal, you would employ some skilful and trusty person to digest them all into some apt and good order, that you may upon any occasion, with very little trouble, make use of them as often as you shall need.²⁴

Is anyone to doubt to whom Laud was referring? Despite the encomium, Laud had

once mentioned in his works that although Somner carried out his duties with zeal, he had failed to supply the annual report on clergy conduct in the diocese, preferring rather to go shooting with his longbow – a rare distraction from a pressured life.

Bearing a mandate from Archbishop Laud, Somner was admitted Proctor of the Canterbury Consistory Court on 20 March 1638, at some five years younger than his father's admission. His father as registrar, and Sir Nathaniel Brent, the Commissary, both attended this court occasion, the latter probably a close friend as Somner's sister Mary Ely had an only child named Brent.

Following probate of William Somner senior's will in September 1638 he unexpectedly received his father's house: it had been bequeathed to the eldest son George who by about that time was domiciled in Margate and perhaps reluctant to come back to Canterbury. A sale was agreed and Somner would now enjoy his childhood home for much of the rest of his life before finally letting it and ending his days in the precincts.

William Somner senior's office of registrar now fell vacant, and was open to purchase. But his son had already been pre-empted by two notaries public, Benjamin Holford and Richard Cobb who, having obtained a reversion to act jointly, were established as joint-registrars in the cathedral nave on 27 February 1639/40, and added insult to injury by proceeding to Castle Street to demand the accumulated court archives and throw out everybody, including Somner himself, from the building. Later, Somner was admitted and then made a record of the proceedings, from which it would appear that the two upstart notaries actually left the office and records untouched.²⁵

The Trauma of the 1640s

No doubt in return for his many services, 'William Somner of the city, gentleman' was made a freeman by redemption²⁶ on 3 March 1640, no payment being offered or received made by virtue of 'the Freedom freely given for being his Grace's deputy register'. A month later on 14 April 1640 at the City Council meeting Somner, returning the signal honour, presented to the city his new book *The Antiquities of Canterbury*. On 21 March 1641/2, amongst all his other duties, he was recorded as the Receiver General for the City of Canterbury on the returns of money collected in St Mildred's and St Mary Magdalene's parishes on behalf of distressed protestants in Ireland, he himself giving 10s. from his home parish of St Margaret's.²⁷

As a passionate monarchist and a fervent adherent of Charles I, the royal execution in January 1648/9 must have been a catastrophic blow to Somner. Monarch and scholar had probably met at the cathedral when the king ascended the tower in 1640. It is not difficult to imagine how the Civil War and the Cromwellian interregnum must have affected him. During the abolition of episcopacy and the dismantling of capitular foundations Somner constantly exercised the trust placed in him and succeeded in salvaging many precious archives and ornaments of the cathedral, no more so than in August 1642 when Colonel Sandys and his troops ransacked and desecrated the cathedral, storing horses and ammunition within its fabric. The archives were ransacked and Dean Bargrave arrested and imprisoned in the Fleet; but somehow Somner managed to recover the looted archives from the military and conceal them.

By a great and terrible irony, the fanatical blue-gowned puritan Rev'd Richard Culmer ('Blue Dick'), whose aim was to 'further the downfall of Babylon', had already smashed some of the windows and, with parliamentary authority, visited the cathedral with the mayor and recorder in 1642 brandishing a copy of 'the *Proctors book*' which included 'a *register of the Cathedral Idolls*' – was this the very copy of his *Antiquities* which Somner had presented to the mayor in 1640 and was now utilised to destroy what its author had manifestly tried to describe and save? Culmer's view of the cathedral with its 'fat revenues' were cogently put when he described the edifice as corrupt and diseased with numerous idols, or 'dung-hill gods, as the Scripture calls them, which defile the worship of God there'. Somner's book now served the iconoclasts as:

... a card and compasse to sail by, in that Cathedrall Ocean of Images: by it many a Popish picture was discovered and demolished. It's sure working by the booke: But here is the wonder, that this booke should be a means to pull down Idolls, which so much advaunceth Idolatry'.²⁸

Somner could only have stood by and wrung his hands as so many of the surviving artistic masterpieces were smashed under the hammer, his antiquarian passion fuelled by the casual or wilful effacing of buildings and inscriptions. In these desperate times one might well ask how he continued to survive. Naturally averse to change and innovation, his zeal for the Church of England was unshakeable; uncomplaining, all he would say was that 'he was overtaken by the impetuous storm, and necessitated to betake himself to other thoughts; chiefly how he might secure himself against the fury, in warding off the danger'.²⁹ His professional world was broken: church court disciplinary cases had ceased and litigation no longer brought in the accustomed fees. The local probate courts had somehow managed to keep going but would stop altogether in the 1650s.

'The Antiquities of Canterbury'

For perhaps two decades Somner had been collecting material (to a fair degree encouraged by his scholarly and clerical friend Meric Casaubon), and making notes for his quarto *The antiquities of Canterbury, or; A survey of that ancient citie, with the suburbs and cathedral, etc.* This can have been no hasty production for Somner was heavily involved in a busy professional life and there can have been few moments of leisure for the budding antiquary. Lambeth Palace gave a licence for his first masterpiece on 23 October 1639 and it was published within the next few months. Its principal sources were post-Conquest Latin documents, for Somner's Anglo-Saxon skills were still incipient and the glories of the *Dictionarium* two long and fraught decades away. It stands as the earliest and best and most scholarly of all the historical accounts of an English provincial borough and its great ecclesiastical monuments, and the first intensive study of an English cathedral. Kennett judiciously observed³⁰ that Somner's writing was like the man himself, 'void of prejudice and passion'.

But underlying it were the anxieties of the present time and the real fear that nothing could last for ever: even ancient Greece which had created and bequeathed so much of beauty then slid into a state of barbarism. Somner now strove to make

the record as complete as was humanly possible in case the national mood were to swing against the church – and with excellent reason as the next decade would prove. Erasmus had visited and described the cathedral with John Colet in 1512 at a time when the shrine of St Thomas was intact and the building a great centre of pilgrimage; Somner’s descriptions of spaciousness and specific features were now complimented by his awareness of the cathedral’s history stretching both into the past, where he quotes the Dutch scholar’s comments in pre-Reformation times, and into the future (with great irony) by intimating the assured continuity of the cathedral and its treasures in times to come.

The book was published at an inauspicious time on the eve of Civil War and with zealous puritan iconoclasm abounding. Criticised by some as idolatrous, it could have sold better than it did, being less read than its author might have hoped for. Many of the surviving copies show evidence of possession by Latin scholars, and others include Laud’s copy at Lincoln College, Oxford, and that of Charles II at the Huntingdon Library in California.

The author would not live to see a second edition, certainly intended as his own interleaved copy survives at Canterbury showing generous notes and corrections.³¹ The work helped to put England on the map of modern Europe, notwithstanding a notable absence of quoted sources for the material employed. The chorographer fittingly dedicated the work to his patron archbishop William Laud (whose coat of arms appeared on the title page), where the prose matched its dedicatee in describing Becket’s shrine as the ‘glory’ of Canterbury which had been ‘cut down’ at the Reformation,³² and calling for the restoration of dedication saints for each church and chapel as were now forgotten.³³ The *Antiquities* shows the mark of its author and his enthusiasm for Canterbury on nearly every page, especially in the opening apologia recording his enthusiasm for general, and more especially, local history – Canterbury cathedral and its archives are almost beyond compare, at least in England, and perhaps throughout the world.

Somner frequently saw the value of, and cited, oral tradition in the *Antiquities*, at one point finding that common tradition was so unequivocal that it rendered citations from actual records unnecessary (and indeed Bede had derived information from the ‘tradition of his elders’). And therefore ‘because tradition keeps it yet in memory with some’ he could afford to quote just a single document as an additional proof; but for him, however, oral tradition was really to be used only as a last resort, and even then supported by further verification ‘as a thing uncertaine I leave it with a *fides penes lectorem esto*, untill further enquiry shall inable me to give him better satisfaction’.³⁴

As the growth of Puritan opposition to good order in church and the preservation of monuments and archives became ever more obvious, such efforts would fall heavily to antiquaries, who began drawing monuments and collecting documents in various counties, a movement greatly helped by William Dugdale of Warwickshire, one of the giants of English antiquarianism. Somner became the local correspondent, and like all other historians he would go back over the works of his predecessors and keep them before him as he wrote. In 1639 he had the opportunity to expatiate on (and illustrate) the new cathedral font given by John Warner, a former prebendary, after his elevation as Bishop of Rochester. Somner observed that the font was the first thing of worth to have been offered in recent

times by private hands, greatly contrasting it with centuries of former benefactions, and highlighting a bleak century for the church since the Reformation.

After the font was torn down by Puritans, Somner managed to collect the broken parts and conceal them until they could be reassembled with new sculpture at the Restoration, in time for his daughter Barbara (by his second marriage, see Part II) to be baptised in it on 11 September 1660. Hasted recorded that she was the first baptism,³⁵ but this claim is also given by the cathedral register to Sophia, the daughter of Dr John Aucher, on 8 October 1663. In his *Life* Kennett relates that Somner at about this time concealed the cathedral archives, partly in his own custody and partly in others', as well as buying back some items from soldiers in need of money.

Published just before Cromwell devastated the London city churches, the volume runs to over 500 pages, its contents all gathered from original manuscripts, and still remains as an authority for the city. The work was to no small degree inspired by Stow's *Survey of London* (which in turn was based on Lambarde's slightly earlier *A Perambulation of Kent*) whose textual arrangement he partly imitates. Smaller than Stow, he amply compensates by superior scholarship and professional training, especially in the comprehension of difficult legal texts. Replete with genealogy and heraldry (but alas, not his own) it soon became an indispensable work of reference and a monument to Laudian antiquarianism. It stands today as the most scholarly of the early antiquarian accounts of any borough in the country, and greatly bolstered by a bibliographical first of the inclusion of an appendix of original documents running to over 100 pages, starting with King Offa's charter of the donation of certain lands to Christ Church, Canterbury, all transcribed in full.

The introduction makes clear that the book has been compiled almost single-handedly. The very origins of the city are confusing, with convention demanding that such noble institutions should have a named founder. Now Somner shows his usual indecision in accepting British history and Geoffrey of Monmouth's tale that Rud Hud Hudibras founded *Kaerreint* (to be renamed Canterbury); Camden was sceptical too, even if other antiquaries and men of judgement accepted it. No – he moves on and leaves the question open.

Kennett describes Somner's favourite practice:³⁶ he would walk the brickfields, the suburbs and the fields to survey buildings, streets and landscapes, ever keen to observe workmen and what might be randomly dug up, and keener still to purchase coins, artefacts and relics as soon as they were disinterred: '... when he had *any hours reliev'd from the business of his calling*, those he devoted to his beloved research into the mysteries of time: to which by the nature of his profession he seemed the more determined; he himself observing, *that to the studie of Antiquitie his particular calling did in some manner lead him* ... walking often in the Nave ... with a curious and observant eye, to distinguish the age of the buildings, to sift the ashes of the dead; and, in a word, to eternize the memory of things and Men. His visits within the City were to find out the Ancestors, rather than the present inhabitants; and to know the genealogie of houses, and walls, and dust'. Escape (and rare ones) from so much antiquarianism was Somner's penchant for trout fishing as well as his fondness for the longbow previously mentioned.

The book, as the title states, deals with antiquities: it concerns itself only with what is the work of civilization, and is therefore an urban description, not a rural or county one. We might therefore expect references to the built landscape and particular

buildings, but while Somner does take some passing notice of architectural styles (as well as archival information), he does so in order to determine age and origins rather than to appreciate whatever impressions a visitor or resident might receive. General indifference to architectural and monumental details, even by one as great as Dugdale, now seems remarkable, but at that time antiquaries were so concerned with inscriptions that they could easily overlook what they were actually inscribed upon.

However, on occasion, Somner did evince interest in architectural style, at one point confirming the date of certain architectural features in the cathedral that he had estimated from historical sources by comparing them ‘with other pieces of that age’.³⁷ He knew that the choir could not be older than the Conquest because ‘the building of it upon arches, a form of Architecture though in use with and among the Romans long before, yet after their departure not used here in England till the Normans brought it over with them from France’.³⁸ Thus he was aware of the limitations of Saxon building and their inability to raise multiple arcades of arches; from the evidence of charters he believed Saxon monasteries to have been built of wood; and he knew that the Normans had introduced Caen stone for their new buildings.

It is in the description of his beloved cathedral that sentiments do occasionally break through as he endeavours to inform the reader of the periods of construction of component parts, the builder or benefactor, and the changes wrought over time. How many times did he traverse nave, aisles, choir and crypt to take in their salient points? ‘Somner walked often in the Nave, not in that idle and inadvertent posture, nor with that common and trivial Discourse, with which those open Temples are vulgarly prophaned’, but observantly, ‘to distinguish the age of the building, to sift the ashes of the Dead’.³⁹ We can hardly doubt that he was impressed by the size, symmetry, decoration and general grandeur of one of the biggest buildings on earth, subsuming any admission of personal feelings as inappropriate to his text. Other occasional lapses revealing his sensitivities occur, for example, near the beginning where he says that the cathedral ‘raiseth itself aloft with so great a Majesty and Stateliness, that it striketh a sensible Impression of Religion in their minds that behold it afar off’.⁴⁰ He was further aware of the cathedral surroundings in disapproving of encroachments over boundaries: ‘should not various edifices be made to keep their distance here, as that nothing of the grace, state and splendour of this chief of sacred structures be eclipsed or obscured?’.⁴¹

Hasted relates that in 1661 booksellers took unsold stock and reissued the volume with a new title ‘pasted over the old’, thus giving the erroneous impression of a second impression.⁴² By the turn of the century, and in peaceable times with more potential readers, even if general levels of learning might be lower, a new edition was being called for. This fell to Nicholas Battely (1648-1704), vicar of Bekesbourne, who had studied in the cathedral archives whilst staying with his brother and antiquary archdeacon John Battely (1646-1708), rector of nearby Adisham, whose several other city appointments must have made for a like-minded fellow scholar, and one whose light clerical duties had afforded him much time for keen study of local antiquities.

Battely took the 1640 edition and produced a much augmented folio second one, incorporating his own corrections as well as the manuscript ones of Somner himself for an intended such volume, to which he added a reprint of Somner’s

posthumous pamphlet *Chartham News* and also his own *Cantuaria Sacra* (as a self-contained ‘Second Part’), chiefly concerned with the history of the see of Canterbury, its cathedral and religious foundations, and based on much original manuscript research in the archives. To the probable relief of a new readership, many of Somner’s heavy Latin texts were relegated to an appendix, but without wholly detracting from the author’s scholarly style, the result of which was a decidedly more popular book.

In the next century William Gostling (1696-1777), another King’s School scholar, Cambridge graduate and local clergyman, would not stint, when writing on deeper matters, to make frequent references to Somner’s text when compiling his *A Walk In and About the City of Canterbury*, published at the end of his life and running through six editions over half a century. More gossipy and most certainly less scholarly than Somner, he too guided the interested around the city on well-informed sightseeing tours.

The towering monument of the *Antiquities* was one destined not to be exceeded, even if nobly approached, by Hasted in his vast undertaking. A county history, it must be admitted, requires that singular and all-encompassing overview given to few men, simply because of the multiplicity of sources; Somner had just the one city within his purview – but what a city! Canterbury’s venerable history, her glorious architecture and archaeology, her stupendous archives, might combine to defeat all but the most determined of writers. The revised and enlarged 1703 edition (which Hasted made use of) still stands as a unique contribution to Canterbury’s general history. Despite three centuries of later scholarship, like many other early antiquaries, his work will stand, never to be wholly eclipsed, even if just for what has been lost since his time and now remains only in the descriptions.

Kennett, while denigrating some of Somner’s antiquarian predecessors,⁴³ relates that general approbation was the order of the day. Somner’s esteemed friend Meric Casaubon called it ‘a pious and laborious work, and highly useful, not only to those who desir’d to know the state of that once flourishing City, but to all that were curious in the ancient English history’. Richard Kilburne (1605-1678), the surveyor and author of *A brief survey of the county of Kent* (1657), said little in his book about Canterbury because ‘Mr William Somner had so elaborately, judiciously and fully wrote of the same, and there was left but little ... which he had not there set down’. And John Philipot (1589-1645), the Folkestone-born herald and Sandwich M.P., was of the opinion that ‘Canterbury hath ... so exactly in all the parts and limbs of it been describ’d and survey’d by Mr Somner.’ and therefore did not want to compete with the *Antiquities* which were ‘pencilled out in so large and exquisite a volume’.⁴⁴

Another worthy friend was Thomas Fuller who regretted on learning of the *Antiquities of Canterbury* that it covered only the city: ‘I am sorry to see him *Subject-bound* (betrayed thereto by his own modesty) seeing otherwise, not the City, but *Diocesse of Canterbury* had been more adequate to his abilities. I hope others, by his example will undertake their respective Counties’.⁴⁵

Antiquarianism

Such was Somner’s reputation among those who had read him, but all of them to a man were inevitably of a seventeenth-century viewpoint and persuasion. No



Fig. 2 William Somner, the antiquary, published in 1693 by Michael Burghers (1647/8-1727).

antiquary in the 1600s belonged to a society and there were no public libraries; Somner must needs use the evidence of his own eyes and those of his circle of intimates, but eyes only and no hands, for the concept of physically digging for information was quite unheard of. Various faltering attempts to petition for libraries and learned societies had generally come up against difficulty and suspicion because of the political and polemic use scholars might make of their knowledge of state papers and legal documents. The Tudor antiquarian society founded in about 1572 through the munificence of archbishop Matthew Parker survived for some three decades, but failed in its attempt for incorporation and saw its last members' admissions in 1607, by which time many were dead or retired to the country.

Not a few had been legal antiquaries, keener on law and heraldry than on

politics, but others were politically motivated including Sir Robert Cotton whose tremendous research library was closed in 1629, feared as it was as a centre of political resistance to the royal prerogative. The court of James I had looked less favourably on antiquarian study as it was unlikely to glorify the House of Stuart or to praise the King's characteristic view of religion – such men would now recall only the achievements of the Plantagenets and Tudors and the former glories of a Catholic church. After the execution of Charles I it became frighteningly apparent that war was no respecter of culture; the Commonwealth rapidly effected a deliberate programme of destruction when in 1641 the House of Commons ordered commissions for the ransacking and defacing of churches and chapels, removing all superstitious images and pictures and thereby fuelling the flames of antiquarianism. But not even the horrors of civil war could entirely extinguish men's tastes and interests, and even the royal soldiers on their enforced marches across the countryside made time to record antiquarian observations – the unravelling of the past was still a communal activity.

We have seen that Somner endlessly toured the cathedral and its suburbs in the pursuit of knowledge. In this he was truly a man of his time for antiquarianism then was a sophisticated, even arcane, field of learning, ploughing a narrow furrow of county families, heraldry, genealogy and the descent of estates, the overview of the whole of the subject of no relevance. The origins of institutions and laws, of names and families were sought from manuscripts, seals, coins, monuments, epitaphs and the representations of arms in stained glass and on tombs; for the most part the countryside and its historical features remained a closed book.

Somner acted bravely in a world of rampant iconoclasm and rapid social change where all was turned upside down and the most threatened of all were the nobility and gentry, the traditional holders of political and social power and of wealth and influence, the very men who were writing and describing histories of places in which the dominant concern became the documentation of title and heritage. The immense effort of recovery in England after the Restoration was not entirely in learning's favour and antiquarian nostalgia succumbed to the problem of re-establishing both tradition and prosperity. The importance of the great collections as well as the need to take care of them was quickly recognized; antiquaries were admitted to the Cottonian library (now in state hands), to the King's Library, to the Harleian collections, and to the stores of the Inner Temple and the College of Arms. Catalogues of the Cottonian and Bodleian libraries were published, and bibliographical descriptions of private collections and book-sales were circulated in manuscript; men like Humphrey Wanley now drew attention to questions of ownership and provenance in their descriptions of various collections.

The Commonwealth and a scholarly circle

Although ardently royalist, Somner did not take up arms, and nor did Archbishop Laud's fall from grace and execution in 1645 deter him from promoting the royal cause and, by extension, the laws of the land. In 1648 he published (by an anonymous printer) *The In-securitie of Princes, considered in an occasionall Meditation upon the kings late Sufferings and Death*, a passionate verse elegy describing Charles I as a 'myrror fit for all posterity' and 'three Kingdoms choicest

treasure'. Here, then, was an antiquary supporting the monarchy. This was followed immediately after the royal execution, probably in 1650, by the (also anonymous) *The Frontispiece of the King's Book Opened*, a poetical discourse on the portrait of the King in *Eikon Basilike* with a call for Charles II to be recognized as the rightful monarch.

The uncertainties of this time did not entirely smother Somner's investigations and writing, even if he could complain to Sir Simonds D'Ewes in 1649 that the turbulence of the period was making access to libraries difficult.⁴⁶ Now he would devote himself, at the prompting of Casaubon, to mastering Anglo-Saxon, and these new skills, coupled with his existing legal ones, progressed in 1644 to a Latin commentary and glossary on the laws of Henry I.⁴⁷ The work was dedicated to Sir Roger Twysden, a scholar who had written extensively on liberty and governance and published the Henrician statutes in the same year. The text was then hardly edited, inevitably faulty, and to benefit greatly from Somner's additions.

Seventeenth-century society was still intensely local, and the appeals to county loyalty in the Kentish rebellion of 1648 had their natural counterpart in the intellectual activities of the gentry, particularly in local history and genealogy. The fact that such works as Somner's *Roman Ports and Forts* were published at all indicates a wide interest in county history among Kentish families, with other works circulating as manuscripts around gentry homes and manor houses. Kennett's lists of Somner supporters appended to his *Life* is ample evidence of such activities.

Meric Casaubon (1599-1671), Somner's 'most intimate guide' and 'ever honoured Maecenas',⁴⁸ the great scholar and prebendary, played no small part as a close friend and companion to Somner, being 'greatly captured' by a man he described as 'born of an honest family, the man himself of ancient honesty and simplicity'.⁴⁹ Casaubon related how his interest in Anglo-Saxon charters was first kindled when, upon being assigned his prebendal stall and gazing with awe on the many ancient documents in the cathedral treasury, he came upon Somner, and realising their common interest in Anglo-Saxon, was encouraged to start the compilation of a dictionary.⁵⁰ Almost a neighbour, he received many visits from Somner at his house in the Mint Yard, and would greatly encourage his younger friend's investigations into Anglo-Saxon. At the final revision of his will he noted 'my trusty friend Mr William Somner'.⁵¹

Kennett now praised the younger man in saying that 'Mr Somner's reputation was now so well established, that no Monuments of Antiquity could be farther published, without his advice and helping hand'.⁵² Casaubon was now researching the Saxon tongue when he came across a letter from Justus Lipsius to Henry Scottius⁵³ which contained a list of early Germanic vocabulary. It was clear to him that there were affinities with Anglo-Saxon and so he immediately sought Somner's opinion who in turn returned his fulsome thoughts demonstrating such relationships, but as they were too long to be incorporated into the main text they were published as a 72-page appendix of German words with Latin equivalents entitled *Ad verba vetera Germanica* in Casaubon's *De quatuor linguis commentationis* of 1650. The copy at Canterbury⁵⁴ is further heavily annotated with the corresponding Anglo-Saxon equivalents by Somner himself, and yet one more example of Somner's diligence in scholarly practice.

Worrying as a decade such as the 1650s must have been to a man of Somner's

diligence and sensibilities, not all was apathy and destruction; had not the 1530s endured the cataclysm of the dissolution but then seen the church survive and grow? Nobody could dispute that society was *in extremis*, and yet antiquarianism would not be extinguished. Somner's indefatigable industry would not cease, and the natural concomitant of a scholarly and intimate circle of like-minded friends and colleagues could mean only that such ties would grow and spread, for antiquarianism was a highly social occupation. Now in his mid-forties and doubtless at the height of his powers, the attraction to other leading antiquarian minds must have been mutually irresistible.

Somner had once observed that no one nation had as many histories of its own affairs, in no small part due to the many extraordinary works of scholarship appearing during his lifetime. His Kentish friend and colleague Sir Roger Twysden (1597-1672) of East Peckham was still mindful of Somner's help and contribution to his earlier edition of the laws of Henry I and its breathtaking exposition of Somner's mastery of mediaeval terms. In 1652, having abandoned warfare to devote himself to research, Twysden published *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores Decem*, a monumental 1,700-page edition of ten Latin histories which included the first edition of Gervase of Canterbury.

The volume was augmented by variant readings, a copious index, and a splendid 84-page double-column glossary of obscure words, obsolete terms and their etymologies wholly compiled by Somner ('A Glossary in which all the more obscure words ... are fully explained ... by the author William Somner of Canterbury'),⁵⁵ a piece of work that Somner later said had heightened his personal expectations of publishing his own *Dictionarium*. This signal contribution would serve as a linguistic guide not only to students of Twysden's volume but to all other researchers into English mediaeval antiquities.

Twysden fulsomely acknowledged his friend in the preface: 'to a man of original honesty and openness, a most shrewd explorer of his native place and antiquities, and most skilled for the purpose in the Anglo-Saxon tongue'.⁵⁶ He added that the *Historiae* would have been of little use to anyone without his friend's glossary, which had improved and amended the *Gallie Glossary* of Pontanus, the *Signification of Words* by Skenaeus, the explanation of terms in Lambarde's *Saxon Laws*, the *Onomasticon* of Clement Reiner, and especially Spelman's glossary; and further, unlike former glossographers, Somner had also commented on place names. Sir John Marsham, in his introduction to Dugdale's *Monasticon*, referred all puzzled readers to Somner's glossary 'where a barbarous word creates him any trouble'. Twysden in the preface was 'to hope for a second Tome, if this first were well accepted'; and indeed Somner had gathered more material but it lay dead in his executors' hands until it was purchased by John Fell, Bishop of Oxford. Even well after Somner's death the glossary merited comment: the great Anglo-Saxonist George Hickes thought it to be the last port of call for any enquirer:

'... provided that Somner's incomparable Glossary in which the more obscure words are explained might be called in as a support; but much happier is it for anybody in those matters steeped in the Saxon language and about to set up his own work to have his own Glossary for himself'.⁵⁷

Despite living in distant Warwickshire, William Dugdale maintained close ties of

friendship and scholarship with Somner, and had already presented him with his *History of Imbanking and Drayning*, as well as *Origines Juridicales*, his work on ancient English law. Both men were interested in researching the history of the primitive church and so tended to be royalists supportive of William Laud and his reforms; in these views they differed from men such as Selden and Francis Taylor who were more interested in studying law and, therefore, its superiority over royal authority. Such antiquarian circles all around the country were similarly divided, some men inevitably being excluded from public life during the Commonwealth, but nevertheless continuing to collaborate, research and publish.

Somner, when at work on his *Dictionarium*, assisted Dugdale in his compilation of the first volume of *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655) by placing his range of extraordinary talents and especial knowledge of Anglo-Saxon at the disposal of the chief compilers. Initial publication had been planned for 1651 but a slump in the antiquarian book trade had delayed matters. Contributions sent by him from Canterbury were various, including the Christ Church and St Augustine's charters, and that of King Stephen to Faversham Abbey as well as other Kentish religious houses, with accompanying translations into Latin of these and other Saxon originals. Illustrations included 'the frontispiece of our Cathedral very exactly and accurately taken, for which I am to pay Mr Johnson 10s',⁵⁸ some plates being engraved by Wenceslaus Hollar. By now he and Dugdale, both non-graduate loyalists, had long enjoyed a growing interest in the Anglo-Saxon language as well as sharing religious and political views.

In November 1654 Somner read, prior to publication, the draft of the first volume of the *Monasticon* with its learned Latin preface, the *Propylaion*, by Sir John Marsham, the royalist antiquary, wherein palms were given to the 'treasurer of antiquities'.⁵⁹ Dodsworth as the chief collector of materials; to Somner for his renderings of the Saxon parts and those from Leland into Latin; and to Dugdale a full proportion of the labour, merit and honour of the undertaking.⁶⁰ But Somner immediately complained that the learned and elaborate introduction made little mention of Dugdale's contributions and his own translations of the Anglo-Saxon charters into Latin (effected in order to assist the reader in his understanding), and that 'The preface is lacking the premise of a Glossary from my hand both to this and the future volume, to come at the end of the latter of them, as taking in all the obsolete words of the whole worke'.⁶¹ Although seemingly unaware that Dugdale's name was to appear below that of Dodsworth on the title page, Somner did attribute to Dugdale 'if not the greater, yet the better part of the collection', and acknowledged that his friend had certainly played a vital role in bringing the work to publication in its final illustrated form. The fact was that Dodsworth had died in 1654, before not much more than one tenth of the impression had been worked up, and so Dugdale had taken the opportunity of associating his name with the work. Some scholars have felt that Somner's contribution was actually more than has ever been disclosed; and local adulation may well bear this out if the introductory verses of Richard Fogge of Dane Court, John Boys of Hothe, and Joshua Childrey of Faversham, all saluting Somner as joint-compiler are anything to go by, whereas Dodsworth and Dugdale do not merit a single explicit mention.

Marsham added further praise for Somner for his translations and corrections, noting that 'for the production of a most richly supplied Saxon-Latin vocabulary

he is presently preparing a mass of type-faces',⁶² thus revealing something of the gestation of the forthcoming *Dictionarium*.

Masterpiece the *Monasticon* may have been, but this did not stop Somner from regretting the cost of £1 5s.: 'doubting that in this low ebbe of most gentlemen's fortunes, few will be so able as willing to go to the price of it; whilst the most will, I feare, be apt enough to boggle at it, in respect of the bulke'.⁶³ Nevertheless, he requested a second copy, and if possible of 'the larger and better sort of paper' so that his brother John might have the first.

Somner further publicly complained about much faulty Anglo-Saxon in the first volume⁶⁴ where he busily made many marginal corrections, and in 1664, upon publication of the second volume, widespread errors were apparent, at which point Somner collated it with the originals and again in the margins made large numbers of emendations.

Somner also helped with the preparation of Dugdale's *Warwickshire* of 1656, making valuable contributions to the etymology of place names, for which he gave final approval and was rewarded with this encomium in the preface: 'Nor should I have adventured thus far, had I not received much light from that learned gentleman Mr William Somner of Canterbury, my singular friend, unto whom I cannot attribute enough for his great knowledge in antiquities, and those commendable works, which he hath already published and is now taking pains in' (that is, the *Dictionarium*). Upon receipt of the manuscript, Somner declared that the preface and two epistles were 'smooth, handsome, learned &c; and the style sober and serious',⁶⁵ but still added minor Latin corrections and corrected other English slips and errors, all of which were adopted before publication, as also was his valuable contribution on the etymology of place names. At publication, and as a critic whose opinion was respected, he said that it was 'so copious and well stored for the matter; so curious and well contrived for the forme; a piece indeed (without all flattery I speake it) to whose composure an industrious hand and an ingenious head have both so well concurred to render it (in one word) a Masterpiece. Seriously, you have drawne the bridge after you and left it impossible for any man to follow you'.⁶⁶ It was no small wonder that Dugdale would be one of the chief promoters of Somner's *Dictionarium* three years later.

Somner had known Sir Henry Spelman (1563/4-1641), one of the founders of the first Society of Antiquaries. The second posthumous volume of his *Concilia* of 1664,⁶⁷ considered inferior to the first of 1639, and part of the glossary were given to Dugdale who made considerable additions. After publication it soon became apparent that the errors of copiers and correctors had produced many faults, whereupon 'Mr Somner, sensible of this, took great pains in collating the printed copy with many of the original records and corrected the errors in the margin of his own book'.⁶⁸ Somner, ever zealous for the truth and with his reputation secure, ensured that his corrections would be accepted. The heavily corrected volume may still be seen at Canterbury.⁶⁹

Four historical works

Written around 1656 but not published until 1694, *Iulii Caesaris portus Iccius illustratus*, was a discourse on the much-disputed embarkation point of the

Caesarean invasion of England. Scholars had argued variously for Calais, Etaples or Wissant, whereas Somner, in forty pages of text, favoured *Gessoriacum* (Boulogne), based on Edmund Halley⁷⁰ who had proved the day, place and actual time of day by astronomical calculation. Then follows a refutation of ‘the late conceits’ in Chifflet’s topographical discourse on the Roman expeditions to Britain, and an assertion of Cluverius’ judgement on the same port. It was finally put into print as a Latin translation by Edmund Gibson (to some degree assisted by his friend White Kennett) at Oxford in 1694, ‘attiring it in the old Roman dress, a garb most suitable to a discourse upon such a subject’. The little book contains a fine detailed map of east Kent, the Channel, and north-western France as evidence of the author’s arguments. Two autograph manuscript versions also exist.⁷¹

From perhaps around the same time, Somner had left in manuscript the text of *A treatise of the Roman Ports and Forts in Kent*,⁷² dedicated to Henry, Viscount Sidney. The work was published in 1693 by the travel writer James Brome (1651/2-1719), Vicar of Newington near Hythe, Rector of Cheriton and Chaplain to the Cinque Ports. It was prefixed by White Kennett’s *Life of Somner* which he had completed in February of that year. Intended as just a small part of a county-wide (and not just Canterbury), survey, it was an exercise in historical geography in the tradition of Camden, identifying the location of antique military stations and giving some account of archaeological discoveries relating to them. Kennett’s scholarly friend Edmund Gibson of Queen’s College, Oxford, future Bishop of London, had supplied learned footnotes which liberally pepper the text. Somner’s scholarship is evident everywhere, for example in his discussion about the etymology of Appledore on Romney Marsh, which runs to four pages and cites the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, charters of King Ethelred, Domesday Book, and Florence of Worcester.

Also perhaps from around this time there survives Somner’s treatise *Litus Saxonicum per Britanniam*,⁷³ written to refute the views of John Selden (1584-1654) in his *Mare Clausum* of 1635. It was never put into print, and so remained as one further unrealised part of a future county-wide survey. The late Roman *Notitia Dignitatum* (*temp.* Diocletian) was the only document to include the title of ‘*litus Saxonicum*’, and was first published by Gelenius in 1553 and then by Panciroli in 1593. William Camden was the first Englishman to show knowledge of it and the first to consider the meaning of the appellation. Selden’s work was occasioned by a contemporary dispute over Anglo-Dutch fishing rights. At the time there were two general interpretations of the Saxon Shore: that of Panciroli who conceived of a Saxon shore establishment in Britain; and that of Camden who thought of it as a coast exposed to Saxon piratical raids. Selden attempted firstly to show that the sea, as much as the land, was subject to the laws of private property, and then to establish English priority of possessions in the disputed areas. For the latter proposition he used the Saxon Shore as important evidence, and thus in essence was opposed to the views of Panciroli, Camden, Ortelius and other writers. Somner rejected Selden’s arguments and strove to vindicate the views of his adversaries, but in doing so managed to say very little about the dates of the Roman withdrawal, Saxon arrival and other important events.

The manuscript does not represent a final draft, as there are many corrections as well as two inserts, but the relatively short text does seem reasonably finished from the point of view of its arguments. It was firstly translated by the American scholar

Donald White,⁷⁴ who noted that it was the only monograph on the subject until the twentieth century; this he then later published in a more substantial volume.⁷⁵

Somner's one other short historical treatise, remaining only in manuscript, was a discussion on the Goodwin Sands, and is housed at Canterbury.⁷⁶ He cites Twine, Lambarde and others who related that the location was once a fertile and well-pastured island lying on a shelf covered by a high sea affording a safe passage for navigators, but which in 1097 was struck by a violent tempest and has ever since been little more than a quicksand after the course of currents changed and allowed more seawater to flow into Flanders and the Low Countries, leaving it 'Charybdis-like and dangerous to navigators'.

It was part of Earl Godwin's patrimony (but merited no mention in Domesday Book), and seemingly was named after him, although Somner will not be so bold as to vouchsafe the etymology, and proposes a probable corruption of the British *gwydn*. But typically and not for the first time, in the absence of firm documentary evidence, beyond this he will not go, seeing it as a difficult research project with no sure prospect of certainty, and so leaving the matter open to conjecture.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 CCAL: DCb J/X.11.19 f.124.
- 2 CCAL: DCb J/X.11.16 ff.57-8.
- 3 KHLC: PRC32/52/76.
- 4 LPL: FI/B f.151.
- 5 CCAL: DCb J/X.11.14 ff.176-8.
- 6 KHLC: PRC32/39/163.
- 7 CCAL: DCb J/Y.3.15 f.461.
- 8 CCAL: DCc Ch. Ant. S/404.
- 9 CCAL: DCb J/Z.2.1-4.
- 10 CCAL: DCb J/X.11.19 f.125a.
- 11 *Life*, 119.
- 12 CCAL: W2/Q-18-18, p. 119.
- 13 CCAL: DCb J/X.11.18.
- 14 *Life*, 4-5.
- 15 CCAL: DCb J/X.11.14 f.108.
- 16 CCAL: DCb J/Z.3.26.
- 17 KHLC: PRC32/53/464.
- 18 CCAL: DCc PET 144.

- 19 KHLC: PRC18/34/124.
20 *Life*, 122.
21 Larking (1862), pp. 138-9.
22 TNA: SP16/330/16, 17.
23 *Life*, 123.
24 Quoted in Collinson et al. (1997), p. 381.
25 CCAL: DCb J/Z.2.1.
26 CCAL: AC4 f.151; FA24 f.457.
27 TNA: SP28/192.
28 Culmer (1644), p. 22 et seq.
29 *Life*, 109.
30 *Life*, 115.
31 CCAL: W/S-11-14.
32 *Antiquities*, pp.245-51.
33 *Ibid.*, p. 510.
34 *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.
35 Hasted (1778-94), XI, p. 353.
36 *Life*, 8-10.
37 *Antiquities*, p. 164.
38 *Ibid.*, p. 168.
39 *Life*, 9.
40 *Antiquities*, p. 90.
41 CCAL: Lit MS A/15 f.4v.
42 Hasted, *op. cit.*, XI, p. 304.
43 *Life*, 19ff.
44 Philipot (1659), p. 93.
45 Fuller (1662), Farewell, p. 100.
46 BL MS Addl. 22916, f.57.
47 BL MS Harley 684; CCAL: Lit MS C/6.
48 *Life*, 116.
49 *ex honesta familia natus, antiquae ipse probitatis et simplicitatis Vir*: Casaubon (1650), p. 140.
50 *Ibid.*
51 KHLC: PRC32/54/37.
52 *Life*, 68.
53 Casaubon, *op. cit.*, p. 143.
54 CCAL: W2/X-3-12.
55 *Glossarium: in quo obscuriora quaeque vocabula ... copiose explicantur ... Gulielmo Somnero Cantuariensi Auctore.*
56 *pristinæ probitatis et candoris viro, patri-arumque antiquitatum indagatore sagacissimo, et ad hoc linguae Anglo-Saxonicae peritissimo.*
57 *si modo incomparabile istud Somneri Glossarium, in quo obscuriora vocabula explic-antur, in subsidium vocetur; sed multo felicius in iis operam suam positurus est, quisquis Saxonice literis imbutus, sibi ipsi Glossarium est*: Hickes (1689), preface.
58 Hamper (1827), pp. 288-9; the Johnsons were a family of artists living in St George's parish.
59 *Life*, 128.
60 Hamper, *op. cit.*, p. 475.
61 *Ibid.*, pp. 282-3.
62 *ad edendam copiosissimam vocabularii Saxonico latini congeriem nunc typos parat.*
63 *Ibid.*
64 *Life*, 104.

- 65 Hamper, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-5.
66 *Ibid.*, p. 309.
67 Spelman (1639, 1664).
68 Gibson (1723), unpaginated ref.
69 CCAL: W/R-8-25.
70 *Life*, 48, 69.
71 LPL: Sion L40.2/E22; CCAL: Lit MS C5 No. 11.
72 CCAL: Lit MS C/7.
73 CCAL: Lit MS C/5 No. 8.
74 CCAL: Pamphlet 73/2.
75 White (1961).
76 CCAL: Lit MS C/5 No. 7.