



Eadgifu, Governor of Kent, in a Lost Charter of Edgar

JAMES LLOYD

ABSTRACT

The witness-list to a charter of Edgar the Peaceable, now lost but quoted by William Somner, designated Eadgifu, Edgar's grandmother, as *in Cantia etiam gubernator*. Although doubts about the authenticity of Somner's source are now unlikely to be resolved, a study of Eadgifu's life and comparison with contemporary cases of shire administration and female secular power show that, at least in theory, the claim that she was governor of Kent is more credible than it may seem.

The use that historians should make of early medieval English charters is not always a straightforward matter. Much depends on the context of the charter's creation or its preservation and the degree of authenticity attributable to it. Those charters that survive as a full text, whether as original copies or later transcripts, can be difficult enough to assess but special problems are posed by those charters that no longer exist at all but survive only as allusions or paraphrases in other documents or historical works.

One such ghostly charter was discussed by William Somner in the first edition of his *Antiquities of Canterbury*, published in 1640.¹ In a section devoted to the history of municipal government, Somner had occasion to discuss the *portgerefa*, literally 'town-administrator', the office that would be re-named bailiff after the Norman Conquest. He cited several examples of port-reeves of Canterbury derived from primary sources, including a lengthy quotation from the witness-list of a charter that, since the publication of his book, has gone missing. The excerpt that Somner quoted is now the only portion of the text still available for study:

... in the yeare 956. to a Deed of the sale of a parcell of Land in *Canterbury* to one *Ethelstane*, by two Knights *Ethelsi* and *Wlfsi*, is the subscription (amongst other witnesses) of one *Hlothewig Portgerefa*, on this wise: *viz.* After King *Edgar*, Queene *Eadgife* (who writes herselfe, *in Cantia etiam Gubernator*), and some others, it followes. + Ego hlothwīg

¹ On this see D. Wright, "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 1', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 140 (2019), 13–36, at 20–4.

portgerefa. [and] se hioerd to xperscircean. [and] se hioerd to see Agustine. [and] ða ðreo geferscipas innan burhwara utan burhwara miccle gemittan.²

This ghostly charter raises several interesting points. Some uncertainty must attend its date. 956 is impossible for a charter of King Edgar. His brother Eadwig had become king in 955. Edgar would not have been referred to as a king until 957, when a schism in the kingdom made him king of Mercia and Northumbria, and he did not become king of all England until 959, so would not have witnessed a charter dealing with land in Canterbury before that date. It is unlikely that Somner's Edgar might be an error for Eadwig, since Eadgifu appeared in only one charter of that king (and that of disputed authenticity) but did appear in several charters of Edgar.³

The likeliest script for Somner's charter would have been Phase IV Square minuscule and the type used by Somner's printer attempts to imitate this, from the *chrismon* to *gemittan*, even using *wyns*.⁴ This suggests that Somner was working off either an original or an early copy. The date of 956, however, is given in Arabic numerals before the transcription proper, so the error need not belong to the original charter. Nicholas Brooks and Susan Kelly suggested three possible solutions: 956 might simply be a printer's error for 965 or 966, either of which would be an acceptable date for a charter featuring both Edgar and Eadgifu; the original charter might have been drawn up in 956 and later confirmed by Edgar, a nuance obscured by Somner's selective quotation of the text; or the charter might originally have been undated but was endorsed erroneously by a later medieval scribe.⁵

² W. Somner, *The Antiquities of Canterbury. Or A Survey of that Ancient Citie, with the Suburbs, and Cathedral* (London, 1640), p. 364.

³ S 658 (*Abing* 83; 959). Charters are cited by their number in P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968), abbreviated S + number. Where possible, texts are cited from the editions published in the multi-volume British Academy series: *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly, 2 pts, AS Charters 7–8 (Oxford, 2000–1); *Charters of Burton Abbey*, ed. P. H. Sawyer, AS Charters 2 (Oxford, 1979); *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, ed. N. P. Brooks and S. E. Kelly, 2 pts, AS Charters 17–18 (Oxford, 2013); *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly, AS Charters 11 (Oxford, 2005); *Charters of Northern Houses*, ed. D. A. Woodman, AS Charters 16 (Oxford, 2012); *Charters of Peterborough Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly, AS Charters 14 (Oxford, 2009); *Charters of Rochester*, ed. A. Campbell, AS Charters 1 (London, 1973); *Charters of St Augustine's Abbey Canterbury and Minster-in-Thanel*, ed. S. E. Kelly, AS Charters 4 (Oxford, 1995); *Charters of Selsey Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly, AS Charters 6 (Oxford, 1998); *Charters of the New Minster, Winchester*, ed. S. Miller, AS Charters 9 (Oxford, 2001), using abbreviations for the archive (*Abing*, *Bur*, *CantCC*, *Malm*, *North*, *Pet*, *Roch*, *Sel*, *WinchNM*), with number. Texts of charters not yet covered by the new edition are cited from W. de G. Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 3 vols. (London, 1883–94), using the abbreviation BCS, with number.

⁴ Phase IV Square minuscule was the script of the related S 1215 (see Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church*, p. 976).

⁵ Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church*, p. 1222.

The first suggestion is attractively simple but unfortunately is the only one of the three that can actually be ruled out by comparison with Somner's own copy of *The Antiquities*, which contains annotations that he made in preparation for a revised edition.⁶ The relevant page contains several alterations but the date of 956 is untouched, so Somner must have been satisfied with how it had been printed. The second suggestion seems unlikely, since a careful reading of Somner's description shows that he assigned not the original property transaction but the subscription to 956. A fourth possibility is that the Roman numerals of the original date were simply misread, either by a very early copyist or by Somner himself, perhaps by mistaking xi for vi. In that case, Somner might have seen the numerals dcccclxi (giving the perfectly credible date of 961) but misread them as dcccclvi (956). The problem with this explanation is that x and v appear quite distinct in other original charters of the period, with the left lower trait of the x reaching below the line such that it would be difficult to mistake it for v. This leaves Brooks' and Kelly's third suggestion, that of an erroneous date endorsed on the charter by a later scribe. In the absence of the original copy, this explanation is unverifiable and feels rather unsatisfying but it is credible and seems to be the only possibility left.

The second point to consider is the resolutely local, Kentish context in which this charter was produced. Hlothwig the port-reeve makes only one other appearance, in a charter that survives as an original single-sheet diploma.⁷ This charter, dated to 968, concerns an exchange of land in Heronden, near Tenterden. Like Somner's charter, it was confirmed by King Edgar. Its witness-list is a most extraordinary creature, boasting the king, Archbishop Dunstan, Abbot Sigefrith, Ælfstan and Birhtsig *praepositi*, Hlothwig *portgerefa*, seven *ministri*, nine *rustici*, 'se hioræd to Cristes circean. [and] se hioræd to sancte Agustine [and] ða þreo geferscipas innan burhwara [and] utan burhwara [and] micle gemettan', Ælfsige *burþen*, the *hioræd* of Appledore and five witnesses who lack a title.

Somner's charter appears to have been of a similar species. For one thing, Hlothwig attested both and in both he used his vernacular title, rather than a Latin translation. Furthermore, both charters are also distinguished by corporate attestations from the convents of Christ Church and Saint Augustine's and from the three fellowships: that within the borough, that outside the borough and the 'many guests'. The three fellowships are also found in two earlier Canterbury charters.⁸

⁶ Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library, W/S-11-14. In the event, Somner did not live to publish the revision, which was finally completed by Nicholas Battely in 1703, in W. Somner, rev. N. Battely, *The Antiquities of Canterbury*, 2nd ed., 2 pts (London, 1703).

⁷ S 1215 (*CantCC* 128).

⁸ S 1199 (*CantCC* 87; 858 × 865) and 1506 (*CantCC* 121; 941 × 958). Somner himself stated that he had 'met with' the *geferscipas* in two other charters (*Antiquities*, p. 364), presumably meaning these.

The Heronden charter's idiosyncrasies are explicable from its local provenance. It was produced not by a royal scribe attending a national assembly but by a Kentish scribe attending a Kentish assembly (albeit one graced by the unusual presence of the king) and interested in Kentish people and institutions.⁹ It would be naive to assume that it was the only local charter produced in Canterbury in this period, or the only charter that its scribe wrote. It is perfectly credible that other charters produced at Kentish assemblies, especially those produced by the same scribe, would have followed a similar style. That Somner's charter is another local production is confirmed by his dialect: the spellings Ethelstane and Ethelsi show the Kentish preference for E- over Æ-.

That the scribe of Somner's missing charter was a local adds to the significance of the title that he accorded to Eadgifu. Brooks and Kelly confessed themselves at a loss to explain why Eadgifu was called *gubernator* of Kent.¹⁰ The remainder of this paper will be devoted to testing the credibility and examining the implications of this, the most intriguing point raised by Somner's charter.

The simplest explanation is that Somner misquoted his source, that he was tricked by eye-skip into assigning to Eadgifu a title, *in Cantia etiam gubernator*, which really belonged to a different testator, presumably one of the 'some others' to whom he alluded between *Eadgive* and *Hlothewig*. Two observations support this hypothesis: first, the gender of *gubernator* is wrong for Eadgifu; secondly, in Somner's personal copy of *The Antiquities* the whole section in parenthesis after Eadgifu's name has been crossed out and accordingly it does not appear in the second edition.¹¹ The deletion is the only significant alteration that Somner made to this page, the others being minor corrections of spelling or syntax. Frustratingly, he included no marginal note to explain the edit. These two points will be addressed in reverse order.

For an academic to make a clumsy error in print is, unfortunately, not unknown but the corollary of this explanation, namely that someone else was *in Cantia etiam gubernator*, loses credibility on examination. If the title attributed to Eadgifu were a common one, such as *episcopus*, *dux* or *minister*, and were without a territorial designation, then this would be an obvious case of eye-skip, but casually assuming that there just must have been some other *gubernator* is dangerous when nothing like the phrase quoted appears in any other known charter. That might be partly explained by the scarcity of local productions in this period, making it difficult to know what was normal in a charter of this nature but it may be significant that the only other charter comparable to this one in date, context and style, the Heronden charter, lacks both the *gubernator in Cantia* and Eadgifu.

⁹ Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church*, p. 977.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1222.

¹¹ Somner, rev. Battely, *Antiquities of Canterbury*, pt 1, p. 178.

The eye-skip explanation also fails on *a priori* grounds: first, Somner could simply have inserted the correct *gubernator's* name in the revised edition. The amendment would have taken only a few words, yet instead he chose to delete the whole entry, which implies that the problem with it was something more complicated than misattribution. Secondly, the title's attachment to a queen was apparently what originally attracted Somner's attention, in which case it is unlikely that he would have made an error transcribing it. Perhaps the simplest explanation for Somner's change of mind is that, since his focus was on the port-reeve, he had decided on reflection that Eadgifu the *gubernator*, a puzzle that, however intriguing, he was unable to explain or explore further, was an unwelcome distraction.

The masculine gender of *gubernator* may also not be as serious a problem as it seems. It was not uncommon for women to use masculine titles if they were performing a traditionally masculine role. In 990, Empress Theophanu of Germany (serving as regent for her son Otto III), who usually styled herself *imperatrix*, issued a charter in her own name calling herself 'Theophanius gratia divina imperator augustus'.¹²

This usage also appeared in literature. Henry of Huntingdon rhapsodised about Æthelflæd, lady of the Mercians, that 'Hec igitur domina tanta potentie fertur fuisse, ut a quibusdam non solum domina uel regina, sed etiam rex uocaretur, ad laudem et excellentiam mirificationis sue.'¹³ To hammer home his point, he wrote a brief poem that is deliberately ambiguous about her sex. One line in particular sums up his point: 'Tu regina potens rexque trophea parans.'¹⁴

It was not unusual for a woman performing what was perceived to be a man's role to use a grammatically masculine title. What was unusual was for a woman to perform what was perceived to be a man's role at all, so the alleged case of Eadgifu *gubernator* deserves to be closely scrutinized.

Eadgifu herself provided us with valuable information about her early life in a written statement that she made *c.* 959 for the (unnamed) archbishop and convent of Canterbury.¹⁵ According to this, her father was Sigehelm, who left her some land just before he and the men of Kent went to battle at the *Holme*, where he was

¹² *Ottonis II. et III. Diplomata*, ed. T. Sickel, MGH Dipl. 2 (Hanover, 1893), 876–7 (no. 2). Cf. *ibid.*, 876 (no. 1), the only other charter that Theophanu granted in her own name (rather than under her son's) but in which she used her real name and feminine title.

¹³ Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum* [hereafter HH, *HA*], v.17: 'This lady is said to have been so powerful that in praise and exaltation of her wonderful gifts, some call her not only lady, or queen, but even king.' In *Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon: 'Historia Anglorum' / The History of the English People*, ed. and trans. D. Greenway (Oxford, 1996), pp. 308/309. Regrettably, Henry's authority on Æthelflæd is compromised by his mistaken belief that she was Ealdorman Æthelred's daughter and Ælfwynn's sister, rather than wife and mother respectively.

¹⁴ HH, *HA* v.17: 'you were a mighty queen and a king who won victories.' Ed. and trans. Greenway, pp. 308/309.

¹⁵ S 1211 (*CantCC* 124).

killed. This information identifies her father with the Kentish ealdorman of that name, whose death leading his shire against the Danes at the *Holme* in 904 is vividly described in the A, B, C and D manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,¹⁶ by the Annals of St Neots¹⁷ and by Æthelweard the Chronicler, ealdorman of the Western Provinces, under the year 902.¹⁸

The date of Eadgifu's birth is unknown but Æthelweard recorded that Sigehelm was a young man (*lanugine tenera* – 'soft of beard') when he was killed, so his daughter must have been a child at the time. This seems to be confirmed by her tenorial arrangements. Putting his affairs in order before the battle, Sigehelm paid off a debt to one Goda, reclaimed an estate at Cooling that he had pawned pending payment of the debt and left the estate to Eadgifu. After Sigehelm's death, however, Goda claimed that the debt had not been repaid and continued to hold Cooling, while one Byrhtsige Dyring ceaselessly claimed the estate from him, presumably on Eadgifu's behalf. Finally, after six years of vicarious litigation, Eadgifu appeared in court herself, presumably now an adult (though she still need only have been in her mid-teens), and swore that the debt had been repaid. Goda still, however, would not give up, until some of Eadgifu's friends interceded for her with King Edward and he deprived Goda not only of Cooling but of all his estates as well (most of which Eadgifu generously returned to him).

Surprisingly, Eadgifu's marriage to King Edward is not mentioned in her statement but the fact that she needed friends to intercede with him for her c. 910 implies that they were not yet personally acquainted. It is also unknown why Edward married her. He already had sons by two previous marriages, so the need

¹⁶ *ASC* MS A, 905 [for 904] (p. 62); *ASC* MS B 905 [for 904] (pp. 46–7); *ASC* MS C 905 [for 904] (p. 72); *ASC* MS D, 905 [for 904] (pp. 36–7). References to manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (*ASC*) are to the series published by D. S. Brewer, abbreviated as follows: *ASC* MS A = *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS. A*, ed. J. M. Bately, *AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition* 3 (Cambridge, 1986); *ASC* MS B = *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS. B*, ed. B. S. Taylor, *AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition* 4 (Cambridge, 1983); *ASC* MS C = *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS. C*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, *AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition* 5 (Cambridge, 2001); *ASC* MS D = *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS. D*, ed. G. P. Cubbin, *AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition* 6 (Cambridge, 1996).

¹⁷ *The Annals of St Neots with Vita Prima Sancti Neoti*, ed. D. Dumville and M. Lapidge, *AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition* 17 (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 104–5.

¹⁸ Æthelweard, *Chronicon Æthelweardi* [hereafter *Chron.Æth.*], iv.4, in *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. and trans. A. Campbell (London, 1962), p. 52, who further dates it to 8 December. The Battle of the *Holme* is also placed under the year 902 in the Mercian Register (*ASC* MSS BC (pp. 49 and 75)) and is briefly alluded to under that year in the Northern Annals (in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, 2 vols., RS 75 (London, 1885) II, 92) but without the circumstantial detail of the other accounts. W. S. Angus ('The Chronology of the Reign of Edward the Elder', *EHR* 53 (1938), 194–210, at 204–7) argued for 902 as the correct date, though he confessed to being worried by the convoluted nature of his own argument. F. T. Wainwright ('The Chronology of the "Mercian Register"', *EHR* 60 (1945), 385–92, at 390–1) was convinced that 902 is correct.

to produce an heir cannot have been a factor. The marriage is likely to have been political, an attempt to curry favour with the powers in the south-east whilst Edward was absent campaigning in the Midlands.¹⁹

The marriage seems to have occurred *c.* 920 (so about ten years after they first met over the Cooling affair): Edward's previous wife, Ælflæd, had been consigned to a nunnery by 918,²⁰ and Eadgifu's first son Edmund was probably born in 921.²¹ Eadgifu would give Edward another son, Eadred, before his death in 924. Her movements during Æthelstan's reign are unknown but the accession of her own son Edmund in 939 brought her to prominence. The earliest charters that she attested date from 940, where she appears immediately after Edmund as *eiusdem regis mater*.²² She remained prominent throughout the reign of her second son Eadred (946–955) but she was one of the many who fell from favour under her grandson Eadwig (955–959), when, as she complained to the archbishop, she was deprived of all her estates.

The accession of her second grandson Edgar restored her to her estates and her former prominence.²³ She attested three of his surviving charters (though not all

¹⁹ S. Sharp, 'The West Saxon Tradition of Dynastic Marriage with Special Reference to the Family of Edward the Elder', in *Edward the Elder 899–924*, ed. N. J. Higham and D. H. Hill (London, 2001), pp. 79–88, at 82. C. R. Hart ('The Battles of The Holme, Brunanburh, and Ringmere', in his *The Danelaw* (London, 1992), pp. 511–32, at 515) suggested that the marriage might have been intended to placate ill feeling in Kent against Edward for his abandonment of the Kentish army but if so he left it rather late.

²⁰ Ælflæd's sole attestation, as *coniunx regis*, is from 901 (S 363; *Malm* 24). There is a tradition that Edward consigned Ælflæd to Wilton Abbey in 917 or 918 (Sharp, 'West Saxon Tradition of Dynastic Marriage', p. 82, though he gives no source for this assertion), possibly because, as a granddaughter of Æthelred I, she was within the prohibited degrees. According to William of Malmesbury, who called her *Aelfleda, uxor Edwardi regina*, she granted lands to Glastonbury Abbey with King Edmund's assent, in events apparently dated to 940 (*De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* chs. 55 and 69, in *The Early History of Glastonbury: an Edition, Translation and Study of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, ed. J. Scott (Woodbridge, 1981), pp. 114 and 142).

²¹ According to *ASC* MSS AD, 940 (pp. 73 and 43), Æthelstan died on 27 October and Edmund acceded at the age of eighteen winters, which (assuming that the annalist was not counting the winter of 940 itself) would mean that he was born in 922. However, this annal is known to have miscalculated Æthelstan's death by an extra year (see M. L. R. Beaven, 'The Regnal Dates of Alfred, Edward the Elder, and Athelstan', *EHR* 32 (1917), 517–31, at 517–21), so Edmund's accession should be dated to 939 and his birth to 921. This ties in with *ASC* MS A, 946 (p. 74), which states that he reigned for six years and a half, terminated by his murder on 26 May. *ASC* MSS BCE (pp. 53, 79 and 55) also place Æthelstan's death and Edmund's accession, without giving his age, in 940. This focus on 940 might be explained if that were the year in which Edmund was crowned, which might have caused that year to be treated as the year of his accession and in turn the year of his half-brother's death. Æthelstan's genuine charters cease in 939 and Edmund's begin in 940.

²² S 465 (BCS 763) and 470 (*WinchNM* 12).

²³ B., *Vita S. Dunstani*, ch. 24, in *The Early Lives of Dunstan*, ed. and trans. M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 2012), p. 76.

are of unquestioned authenticity)²⁴ and was the beneficiary of another.²⁵ It has even been suggested that she may have retired to a nunnery.²⁶ Her last attestations were in 966, by which time she must have been aged around seventy.²⁷ She had died by 967, when Edgar granted part of Meon, an estate that he had formerly given to Eadgifu, to his maternal grandmother Winflæd.²⁸ A later medieval Christ Church obituary list gives the date of her death (*sans* year) as 25 August.²⁹

This was the woman who, at least in her twilight years, apparently served as *gubernator* of Kent. If this is true, what might being *gubernator* have involved? The natural assumption is that the office was comparable to that of ealdorman. The last two ealdormen of Kent as such were Eadgifu's father Sigehelm and his co-ealdorman Sigewulf (the common prototheme of their names suggests that they were related), who was killed alongside him at the *Holme*. It was conventional for sons to be appointed to their father's ealdormanries but Sigewulf's son Sigeberht was also killed in the battle. In the absence of sons, did Edward resort to appointing a daughter?

The idea should not be dismissed out of hand, for one other woman is known to have served as an ealdorman when male candidates for the post had run out. His sister Æthelflæd was of Mercian royal descent through her mother and their father King Alfred married her off to Æthelred, ealdorman of English Mercia. After Æthelred fell ill in the 900s, it was Æthelflæd who took over his duties and after his death in 911 she assumed his role fully.³⁰ After her own death in 918, she was apparently succeeded by her daughter Ælfwynn, only for her to be *alces onwealdes on Myrcna benumen* by Edward and transported to Wessex, never to be heard from

²⁴ S 673 (*Abing* 84; 959), 745 (*WinchNM* 23; 966) and 746 (*WinchNM* 24; 966). The last is spurious, the first may be.

²⁵ S 811 (BCS 1319; 959 × 963).

²⁶ P. Stafford, 'Eadgifu (b. in or before 904, d. in or after 966)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, 60 vols. (Oxford, 2004) XVII, 527–8, at 527.

²⁷ The interpretation of Eadgifu's charter attestations is discussed by A. Campbell, *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, Camden 3rd ser. 72 (London, 1949), 62–4.

²⁸ S 754 (BCS 1200); see C. R. Hart, 'Two Queens of England', *The Ampleforth Journal* 82 (1977), 10–15 and 54, at 13.

²⁹ Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church*, p. 966.

³⁰ The so-called Mercian Register (*ASC MSS BCD*, 902–24) starts to refer to her as *Myrcna blfædige* ('lady of the Mercians') only after Æthelred's death and states that Æthelflæd died in 'þy eahtopan gear eæs þe heo Myrcna anwald mid riht hlaforddome healdende wæs' (*ASC MSS BCD*, 918 (pp. 50, 76 and 40)) – 'in the eighth year in which with lawful authority she was holding dominion over the Mercians' (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Revised Translation*, ed. D. Whitelock, with D. C. Douglas and S. I. Tucker, rev. ed. (London, 1965), p. 67). She is called *domina Merciorum* in S 224 (*Bur* 1; 800 for ?914). See further 'Aethelflaed Lady of the Mercians', in *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of their History and Culture, presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. P. Clemoes (London, 1959), pp. 53–69, re-printed in and cited from *Scandinavian England: Collected Papers by F. T. Wainwright*, ed. H. P. R. Finberg (Chichester, 1975), pp. 305–24, at 307–9.

again.³¹ This tale of marriage, power and female sovereignty may provide an analogy for the case of Eadgifu.

Eadgifu was a minor at the time of her father's death, so the office of ealdorman apparently fell vacant. Although the possibility of unrecorded or unidentified successors cannot be ruled out, such a vacancy would make Kent fit into the general shift in how shires were administered that is seen in this period. The expansion of West Saxon power into Mercia and Northumbria, rather than increasing the number of ealdormen, actually reduced it, shires (both the historic shires of Wessex and the newly created shires of the Midlands) being bundled together into groups assigned to a diminishing number of ealdormen, whose regular succession was not always maintained.³² This would remain the standard policy for ealdormanries until the Norman Conquest.³³

Increasingly, other officials are seen to shoulder the burden formerly borne by ealdormen.³⁴ One such official was the bishop, who presided jointly with the ealdorman over the shire court.³⁵ When the ealdormanry was left vacant or

³¹ *ASC* MS BCD, 919 (pp. 50, 76 and 41 respectively) – 'deprived of all authority in Mercia' (transl. Whitelock, *ASC: a Revised Translation*, p. 67). For the view that her deprivation really took place in late 918, see Wainwright, 'Chronology of the "Mercian Register"', pp. 388–90. On Ælfwynn generally, see M. Bailey, 'Ælfwynn, Second Lady of the Mercians', in *Edward the Elder*, ed. Higham and Hill, pp. 112–27. Bailey assumes that S 535 (*CantCC* 118; 948), which King Eadred granted to *cuidam relegiose femine uocitate nomine Ælfwynne*, was for the former lady of Mercia but there is nothing to connect the two women other than their name.

³² C. R. Hart argued that Osferth, Wulfstan and Æthelwold were successive ealdormen of Kent, with Sussex and Surrey and possibly Essex, across the period 926–946, on the ground that the pattern of their charter attestations implies that they succeeded one another in the same ealdormanry ('The Ealdordom of Essex', in *An Essex Tribute: Essays Presented to Frederick G. Emmison*, ed. K. Neale (London, 1987), pp. 57–85, revised, reprinted in and cited from his *The Danelaw*, pp. 115–40, at 124–5; and 'Athelstan "Half King" and his Family', *ASE* 2 (1973), 115–44, revised, reprinted in and cited from *The Danelaw*, pp. 569–604, at 573, n. 11). He cited no evidence that explicitly associated any of these men with Kent, rather assuming that it continued to form a parcel with Sussex and Surrey, as it had done as a West Saxon under-kingdom ('Ealdordom of Essex', pp. 115–16). His tables 21.3–6 in *The Danelaw* assume that Ælfheah, ealdorman of Wessex 959–970, was also ealdorman of Kent, Sussex and Surrey but it is not clear why he believed this.

³³ A handbook of ealdormen, cataloguing their sources, dates and territory, is a desideratum but a beginning was made by C. R. Hart in *The Danelaw*, tables 3.1–3, 5.2 and 21.1–7 and maps 21.1–2. The practice of sharing shires is examined by H. M. Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions* (Cambridge, 1905), pp. 171–97; H. R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500–1087*, *The Governance of England* 1 (London, 1984), 74–7; H. R. Loyn, *The Making of the English Nation from the Anglo-Saxons to Edward I* (London, 1991), pp. 80–1; and J. W. Lloyd, 'Reeves as Agents of Royal Government in the English Shires, from the Reign of Alfred to Domesday Book' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Cambridge Univ., 2014), pp. 52–7.

³⁴ The following paragraph is a very brief summary of the delegation of ealdormen's functions. The subject is discussed in detail in Lloyd, 'Reeves as Agents of Royal Government', pp. 57–62.

³⁵ III Edgar, c. 5:2; ed. F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols. (Halle, 1903–16) I, p. 202.

merged with others, bishops would have been left on their own at the pinnacle of the shire hierarchy and there is no reason why they should not have officiated on their own. Archbishop Wulfstan (himself a prolific legislator) encouraged bishops to take an active interest in judicial affairs and local administration,³⁶ and there is even one known example of a bishop (in the first half of the tenth century) who sentenced thieves to death.³⁷ In the Danelaw, the jarls seemed to have ruled small districts and their continued appearance in charters suggests that their services were retained after their territories were conquered.³⁸ A good example is Earl Thurferth, who led the submission of ‘þa holdas, [and] eal se here þe to Hamtune hierde norþ oþ Weolud’ to King Edward at Passenham in 917.³⁹ These geographical points suggest that his jurisdiction covered Northamptonshire. He went on to appear among the *duces* in four of Æthelstan’s charters.⁴⁰

The main official seen to undertake responsibility for shires was the reeve, a development that appears in Kent around the time of Eadgifu’s alleged governorship. The Heronden charter was attested, just before Hlothwig, by two *praepositi*, Ælfstan and Birhtsige. This term can mean two things. It might be used to refer to religious dignitaries, specifically the prior of a religious house or the reeve of its estates.⁴¹ Three religious houses were corporately present at the assembly, to any of which Ælfstan and Birhtsige might have been attached. The appearance of monastic *praepositi* in charter attestations was, however, always

³⁶ *Episcopus*, chs. 4–6, 9 and 12, in *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, I: A.D. 871–1204*, ed. D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C. N. L. Brooke, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1981) I, 419–21.

³⁷ *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, ch. 16, ed. T. Arnold, *Memorials of St Edmund’s Abbey*, 3 vols., RS 96 (London 1890–6) I, 21.

³⁸ This view was first suggested by Hector Chadwick (*Studies*, p. 203) and has garnered many modern supporters, e.g. P. A. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: a Political History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1989), p. 26.

³⁹ ASC MS A, 921 [for 917] (p. 68) – ‘The *holdas* submitted to him and so did all the army which belonged to Northampton, as far north as the Welland’ (Whitelock, *ASC: A Revised Translation*, p. 66).

⁴⁰ S 405 (BCS 1343; 930), 407 (*North* 1; 930 for 934), 416 (BCS 677; 931) and 417 (BCS 689; 932).

⁴¹ B.’s *Vita S. Dunstani* contains examples of both such usages, at one point putting *prepositi* first in a list of the ecclesiastical hierarchy that rises up through *decani*, *abbates*, *episcopi*, *etiam archiepiscopi* (chap. 15.3, *Early Lives*, ed. Winterbottom and Lapidge, p. 52) but at others using *prepositus* for men, whether monastic or lay, who managed Glastonbury Abbey’s properties (chaps 18.1 and 34, pp. 58 and 96). Byrhtferth of Ramsey treated *praepositus* of an abbey as interchangeable with *dispensator* (*Vita Sancti Oswaldi* iii.16, in *Byrhtferth of Ramsey: the Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgvine*, ed. and transl. M. Lapidge (Oxford, 2009), p. 88 and cf. p. 89, n. 163). For a list of the functions of the *praepositus*, see the *consuetudines* of Fleury Abbey (*Consuetudines Saeculi X/XI/XII Monumenta Non-Cluniacensia*, ed. K. Hallinger, *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum* 7, pt 3 (Siegburg, 1984), 13–14).

rare and is last seen in Kent in the early ninth century.⁴² *Praepositus* was also one of several Latin words used for vernacular *gerefa*, so these two men may have been joint-reeves of Kent (which had formerly had two joint-ealdormen).

The first unambiguous example of a reeve who administered Kent was Wulfstan, who is reported to have acted as King Edgar's representative in the memorandum of a land dispute.⁴³ A royal assembly at London agreed that certain charters (and therefore their lands), which had been stolen from Rochester Cathedral and were now held by a widow, were forfeit to the king. In execution of this judgement, Wulfstan *se gerefa* attempted to take possession of the estates *to ðæs cinges banda* (on the king's behalf). The widow, however, outmanoeuvred the king by making a private agreement with the bishop that he would buy the estates from the king but allow the widow their usufruct for the rest of her life.

A second assembly witnessed the bishop's purchase of the estates from the king and the memorandum ends with what purports to be a list of those present, including (though not immediately sequential) Wulfstan of Dalham and 'seo duguð folces on Westan Cænt' (the nobility of the people in West Kent). This makes it tempting to identify Wulfstan the reeve as Wulfstan of Dalham. There is a potential connection with Eadgifu here, since Wulfstan of Dalham was also 'seneschal of Queen Eadgifu's East Anglian properties'.⁴⁴ There is beautiful neatness in imagining that it was Eadgifu who appointed him reeve of Kent and that he continued in office after her death.

There are, however, several problems with this interpretation. First, Wulfstan was a very common name, so two Wulfstans should be identified only on strong evidence. Secondly, the witness-list is not strong evidence, for it contains several anachronisms. It is attested by King Edgar yet also by an ealdorman who was not appointed until Edward the Martyr's reign, by two bishops who were not appointed until Æthelred II's reign and by *ðæs cinges modor Ælfðryð*, a designation possible only in Æthelred II's reign.⁴⁵ Ironically, a more credible witness-list appears in a near-contemporary forgery that purports to be the charter recording the purchase.⁴⁶ Its supposed date of 955 is too early for Edgar and its indiction of 966 is wrong, for the witness-list would fit only the year 973, thus giving an

⁴² Kentish charters attested by *praepositi* who appear among the ecclesiastical witnesses are S 22 (*CantCC* 8b; 716 – a forgery using an authentic witness-list), 159 (*CantStA* 16; 804), 161 (*CantCC* 37; 805), 1259 (*CantCC* 36; 805) and 1265 (*CantCC* 47; 813 for 808 × 813). See also S 1434 (*CantCC* 56; 824), in which *Aeðelbun presbyter propositusque* [*sic*] is referred to in the main text (though he does not attest) after Wernoth and Feologeld each identified as *presbyter et abbas*.

⁴³ S 1457 (*Roch* 36).

⁴⁴ Hart, 'Two Queens', p. 13.

⁴⁵ See discussion in A. J. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 365 and 367.

⁴⁶ S 671 (*Roch* 29).

approximate (though authoritatively uncertain) date for these events. The charter describes the activities of Wulfstan *regis praefectus*, who is described handing over the charters in exchange for the bishop's cash and he may be intended as the same man as the Wulfstan *minister* who appears in the witness-list but Wulfstan of Dalham as such does not appear.

There is rather more certainty about the identity of the next reeve of Kent. Another memorandum records a shire court held at Crayford between 984 and 988. It was attended by a certain Wulfsige, described variously as Wulfsige the priest and Wulfsige *se scirgiman*, who accepted an oath *to ðæs cinges banda*.⁴⁷ *Scirgiman* (or *scirman*) does not necessarily mean a man who administered a shire but rather was, like *gerefa*, a generic term for any kind of administrator.⁴⁸ The context in which Wulfsige appears, however, makes it quite clear that he administered the shire of Kent. Leofric *se scyresman* is mentioned as present at a shire court convened by Archbishop Sigeric (995–1005).⁴⁹ An Ælfwine *praefectus meus in Kent* is claimed in a Westminster forgery purporting to date from 998,⁵⁰ but he may be a confused memory of Æthelwine, who attested charters as variously *scirman*, *sciregerefa* and *praefectus* early in Cnut's reign.⁵¹ From Æthelwine onwards, Kent has been administered by sheriffs as such.

In sum, Kent was administered by ealdormen until the death of Sigewulf and Sigehelm. There then ensues a gap in our knowledge of about seventy years, after which the shire is seen to be administered by officials called variously *gerefa*, *scirman* or finally *scirgerefa*. Eadgifu's life fell almost entirely within that gap and, just before Wulfstan's emergence (and perhaps overlapping with it), she herself was apparently *gubernator* of Kent. With the exception of Somner's charter, this title was never used in witness-lists and only ever appeared in charters as part of the royal title. King Edgar used it at least twenty-one times, often in apposition to *rex*, *rector* or *basileus* or in an extravagant combination, such as 'industrius Anglorum rex ceterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium gubernator et rector'.⁵²

⁴⁷ S 1458 (*Roch* 34). For the date, see Lloyd, 'Reeves as Agents of Royal Government', p. 115. For the location, see C. Flight, 'Four Vernacular Texts from the Pre-conquest Archive of Rochester Cathedral', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 115 (1995), 121–53, at 138–9, nn. 30 and 35.

⁴⁸ Lloyd, 'Reeves as Agents of Royal Government', p. 82.

⁴⁹ S 1456 (*Roch* 37).

⁵⁰ S 894, printed in B. Thorpe, *Diplomatarium Anglicum Aevi Saxonici: a Collection of English Charters from the Reign of King Aethelberht of Kent, A.D. DC.V. to that of William the Conqueror* (London, 1865), pp. 296–8, at 298.

⁵¹ S 985 (*CantCC* 145; 1017 × 1020); S 1461 (*CantCC* 149; 1016 × 1020); and S 950 (*CantCC* 144; 1018).

⁵² S 674: 'industrious king of the English and governor and ruler of the other nations being in their orbit' (*Pet* 13; 958). Edgar used this or a similar title in S 668, 679, 680, 681, 685, 687, 690, 691, 693, 698, 703, 715, 724, 727, 730, 755, 769, 770, 793 and 811, as well as in the dubious S 688 and 704. He described himself as 'totius Brittanice insule regimina ... gubernans' (governing the

Gubernator, it seems, had regal connotations and there is further evidence that it was used as a euphemism by people who were not monarchs officially but did regard themselves as such. In 901, Æthelred and Æthelflæd, officially the ealdorman of the Mercians and his wife, granted a cyrograph which describes them as *monarchiam Merceorum tenentes honorificeque gubernantes et defendentes*.⁵³ Æthelflæd alone used a similar phrase in a charter (apparently authentic but surviving only as an adjusted copy), in which she described herself as *gubernacula regens Merciorum*.⁵⁴ Alfred and Edward may have denied Æthelred and Æthelflæd the regal title but they were not afraid to flirt with it and *gubernare* was one of the terms they used to imply it.⁵⁵

This provides some clues to how *gubernator* was meant when applied to Eadgifu. For one thing, although she is not called *regina* in any authentic contemporary source,⁵⁶ she had been a king's wife, so it was not inappropriate for a quasi-regal title to be applied to her. For another, like Æthelred and Æthelflæd, she governed no ordinary shire but a former kingdom. To call her Queen of Kent as such would have been provocative but, at least in the eyes of the Kentish scribe, she could justly be called something close to that.

The example of Æthelflæd also warns against assuming that Eadgifu's sex disqualified her from occupying an administrative office. Her case is certainly unusual when set against Anglo-Saxon history in general but it becomes more credible when set in its proper context, in the mid-tenth century, when kings were experimenting with new ways of administering shires.

Indeed, this paper is not the first to argue that Eadgifu had a role in administering Kent. Pauline Stafford, who was unaware of Somner's charter, pointed out that Eadgifu was listed first, before Archbishop Oda (941–958), among the witnesses to a will made in Kent.⁵⁷ Stafford argued that this pointed to some

government of the whole British island) in S 782 (*Pet* 15; 971). All translations of charters in this paper are my own. One might, in a revival of the eye-skip hypothesis, wonder if *in Cantia etiam gubernator* were in fact part of the royal style as rendered in the missing charter but a governorship of Kent seems at odds with the expansive claims of Edgar's attested titles.

⁵³ S 221: 'holding and honourably governing and defending the monarchy of the Mercians' (BCS 587).

⁵⁴ S 225: 'ruling the governorship of the Mercians' (*Abing* 20; 878 for 915).

⁵⁵ The closest that Æthelred came to using the regal title himself was in S 346 (BCS 561; 889), a charter, not above suspicion in its current form, which, using the title *subregulus et patricius Merciorum*, he granted jointly with Alfred *rex Anglorum et Saxonum*.

⁵⁶ She is called *regina* in S 477 (*CantCC* 111; forged), 546 (*CantCC* 120; probably forged) and 1212 (*CantCC* 125), a rather free Latin translation of S 1211, which inserts *regina et mater Eadmundi et Eadredi* where there is no equivalent phrase in the original.

⁵⁷ S 1511 (*Roch* 35). This document has conventionally been dated 975 × 987 but Colin Flight has argued convincingly for an earlier date of 964 × 975 ('Four Vernacular Texts', 126–7). S 1511 is actually two wills in one: the main text is the will of Beorhtric and Ælfswith but Eadgifu witnessed

administrative role in the shire.⁵⁸ Such a reading may draw too much from too little: as a king's widow and an ealdorman's daughter, Eadgifu was naturally the kind of high-status individual whose attestation was useful in a will and her precedence over the archbishop follows the pattern established for her in royal charters. The title that she used in the will was *ðære blæfdian*, the generic title for women of distinction and reveals nothing for or against Stafford's interpretation.

More suggestive of an administrative role are Eadgifu's landholdings. She held considerable property in Kent, some of it inherited from her father and some granted to her by her sons. The gift most relevant to this paper's inquiry was made in 955, when King Eadred willed to Eadgifu all his booklands in Kent, Sussex and Surrey.⁵⁹ That her son was simply celebrating his mother's Kentish origins is a possible explanation but rather trite. The only previous document to treat the king's booklands in Kent as a parcel was King Alfred's will, under which he bequeathed them to his son and successor Edward.⁶⁰ This implies that the Kentish lands had a special relationship with the monarchy. They have been construed as Crown lands, what a later generation would call 'ancient demesne' (it may have been for this reason that King Eadwig confiscated them).⁶¹ Lands were also assigned to ealdormen and sheriffs *ex officio*.⁶² Eadred's gift thus gives the impression that he was establishing his mother in an administrative or even quasi-monarchical position in Kent.

Ealdormen and sheriffs were assisted in the performance of their functions by a staff of under-reeves.⁶³ Reference has already been made to the *praepositi* Ælfstan and Birhtsige, who appeared in a Kentish charter shortly after Eadgifu's disappearance. The evidence is circumstantial but it is possible that, if 'reeve' is the correct translation of their title, they had been Eadgifu's own subordinates and

an earlier will, which is quoted in the main text as part of the history of one of the estates bequeathed in the new will.

⁵⁸ Stafford, 'Eadgifu', p. 528.

⁵⁹ S 1515 (*WinchNM* 17).

⁶⁰ S 1507 (*WinchNM* 1). Bailey's statement ('Ælfwynn, Second Lady of the Mercians', p. 124) that Alfred gave his Kentish lands to his wife Ealhswith is erroneous.

⁶¹ Hart, 'Two Queens', pp. 12–13. Hart also stated that the booklands were the only Kentish property that Eadgifu retained when she granted her other estates in that shire to Christ Church in 961 but his evidence for this is a charter that was fabricated after the Norman Conquest and contains several factual errors (S 1212; see Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church*, pp. 966–7).

⁶² S. Baxter and J. Blair, 'Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: a Model and a Case Study', *ANS* 28 (2006), 19–46, at 23–8; S. Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 141–5 and 147–9; Lloyd, 'Reeves as Agents of Royal Government', pp. 65–6.

⁶³ Alfred's law-code mentions the ealdorman's *gingra*, 'junior' (Alfred-Ine, c. 38:2; *Gesetze* I, p. 72), who should probably be identified with the reeve (Lloyd, 'Reeves as Agents of Royal Government', pp. 47–52). On sheriffs' under-reeves, see W. A. Morris, *The Mediaeval English Sheriff to 1300* (Manchester, 1927), pp. 53–4; Lloyd, 'Reeves as Agents of Royal Government', pp. 66–8.

continued in office even after she had died. Under-reeves also serve to make Eadgifu's position as governor of Kent seem more credible by creating the possibility that it was only an honorary position, that the under-reeves performed her duties on her behalf while she gloried in being nominal governor, the shire an ornament for her and she an ornament for the shire.

There is one last doubt that might be raised against Eadgifu's governorship and that is the question of whether or not Somner's charter was authentic at all. The most serious difficulty with the charter's authenticity is that, apparently, it called Eadgifu *regina*, or at least that is what Somner implied when he called her 'Queen Eadgive (who writes herself, in *Cantia etiam Gubernator*)'. The only other charters in which Eadgifu used the title *regina* are either known or suspected to be forgeries and all hailed from the same archive as Somner's charter: Canterbury. Was Somner's charter just another Christ Church forgery?

One must remember that this charter was a local production, so that to judge it by rules established for central productions may be unfair. Eadgifu's attestation as implied by Somner would have been something like *Eadgifu regina in Cantia etiam gubernator*, which resembles several of Edgar's titles. Surely, a forger cannibalizing Edgar's charters for inspiration would have applied such a title to him, not to his grandmother? Conversely, a local scribe with an inflated view of Kent's importance (and one can never have too inflated a view of Kent's importance) might indeed have modelled an *ad hoc* title for his shire's governor on the king's verbose titulature. The attestation is also made in a flamboyant way, as though to attract attention. The scribe could simply have written *regina et in Cantia gubernator* but instead he used the adverb *etiam*, giving her attestation a literary flourish and making it sound like a public announcement.⁶⁴

There is some evidence that scribes acting in an unofficial capacity did have a habit of being less reserved about Eadgifu's title. Wulfstan of Winchester, writing in 996 or shortly after, and Adelard of Ghent, writing during the archiepiscopate of Ælfheah (1006–1012), both called her *regina* in reference to events in Eadred's reign.⁶⁵ Eadgifu applied no title to herself in her aforementioned statement to the archbishop but the document is endorsed in an eleventh-century hand *Eadgyna Regina*. It was later used as the basis of a post-Conquest forgery in which Eadgifu is called *regina et mater Eadmundi et Eadredi*, which in itself is only a statement of the truth.⁶⁶ Similarly, Eadgifu's title *ðære blæfdian*, used in the will that she witnessed

⁶⁴ I owe this observation to Tom Licence.

⁶⁵ *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, ch. 10, in *Wulfstan of Winchester: the Life of St Æthelwold*, ed. and trans. M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1991), p. 18 (for the date, see *ibid.*, pp. xvi and xcix–ci); *Lectiones in depositione S. Dunstani*, ch. iiiii, in *Early Lives of St Dunstan*, ed. Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 120.

⁶⁶ S 1212 (*CantCC* 125).

with Archbishop Oda, was rendered *regine* in a later Latin translation.⁶⁷ Finally, she was referred to as *regina Eadgiva* in a memorandum, apparently based on a lost charter or charters, in the Anglo-Norman Christ Church cartulary.⁶⁸ Historian, endorser, forger, translator and cartularist may have inserted information not present in the original texts but it was not factually wrong. If the text that Somner was paraphrasing was itself a translation of a vernacular document or a later transcript of the original, then a similar interpolation may have been made with equal sincerity and authority.

It is even possible that ‘Queene’ was an interpolation by Somner himself. His transcription imitates contemporary minuscule only from the chrismon onwards, so that it cannot be certain how much of the text before then was quoted directly from the charter in front of him. This might also explain why he gave Eadgifu’s name in the later medieval form Eadgive (cf. Godiva from Godgiefu), although that form did occasionally appear in contemporary charters.⁶⁹

Finally, the charter’s most outlandish feature, its claim that Eadgifu was governor of Kent, far from arousing suspicion, might actually support the case for its authenticity. A forgery that makes blatantly false claims that do not assist its litigious purpose defeats itself, so, even if the land grant that this charter concerned were fictitious, or even if this charter were manufactured by some Christ Church scribe cribbing off the Heronden charter, that would still not explain why it called Eadgifu *in Cantia etiam gubernator*. That claim had no bearing on its case and cannot have been copied from any other known charter, even the Heronden charter. Unless the forger simply had a flight of sheer fancy, this at least must be something that he believed had been true and expected his audience to believe as well.

CONCLUSION

Eadgifu was born in the 890s, the daughter and sole known child of Sigehelm, one of the last two ealdormen of Kent, who fell in battle with the Danes in 904. She was introduced to King Edward the Elder around 910, shortly after she came of age. Ten years later, she married him, becoming the mother of successive kings Edmund and Eadred. During her sons’ reigns, she was a prominent member of the court and Eadred may have put her into some administrative position in her father’s shire of Kent. The brief reign of Eadwig saw her banished from her former position of influence and her lands were confiscated but she was restored

⁶⁷ *Roch* 35b.

⁶⁸ S 1631 (*CantCC* 117; 947). Brooks and Kelly dated the Christ Church Anglo-Norman cartulary (which survives in later copies but not in the original manuscript) to (1067 × 1075) × c. 1125 and probably 1090 × 1120 (*Charters of Christ Church*, pp. 59–71).

⁶⁹ Genuine or probably genuine charters use the forms *Eadgiva* in S 506 (*Sel* 18; 945), *Eadgine* in S 1526 (BCS 1008; 942 × c. 951) and *Ædgina* in S 572 (BCS 1346; 954 × 955). See also S 1631 (see above, p. 11 and n. 68).

Eadgifu, Governor of Kent, in a Lost Charter of Edgar

by her younger grandson Edgar. She was fondly remembered in her ancestral shire: Somner recorded, in another of his works, that a picture of Queen Eadgifu was, until recently, preserved in the treasury of Canterbury Cathedral, in gratitude for her gifts.⁷⁰ She was even styled, in a charter written locally and surviving only in a brief quotation, *gubernator* of Kent.

In the absence of the original, or even a cartulary copy, of that charter, its evidence will always be attended by a quantum of doubt. Its date is impossible and there is even the nagging suspicion that Somner transcribed it incorrectly, but its claim about Eadgifu, however superficially preposterous, proves on examination to be at least theoretically acceptable. Though examples of female secular power are rare in this period, Eadgifu's case is not incongruous amongst those that do exist and it also makes sense in the context of contemporary developments in local administration. In her lifetime ealdormen, who formerly administered shires, were being reduced in number, while other officials increasingly assumed the burden of their functions, culminating in the emergence of the sheriff in the half-century after her death. Eadgifu's governorship of Kent, however brief or nominal, would fit into this overall pattern and she, herself daughter of the last ealdorman, was beautifully qualified for the job.⁷¹

⁷⁰ W. Somner, *A Treatise of Gavelkind*, 2nd ed. (London, 1726), p. 113.

⁷¹ The author would like to thank Faun Todd and Toby Huitson of Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library for supplying an image of CCAL W/S-11-14, p. 364, for reference. He would also like to thank those present at the British Academy Symposium on Anglo-Saxon Charters on 11 September 2018, at which an earlier version of this paper was presented, for their comments and encouragement (with apologies for the delay).