

= Richard de Southchurch =

Sir Richard de Southchurch (Suthchirche , Suthcherch) (died 1294) was a knight and part of the landowning aristocracy of Essex in the thirteenth century . He was High Sheriff of Essex and of Hertfordshire in the years 1265 ? 67 , and as such became involved in the Second Barons ' War (1264 ? 1267) . Southchurch has earned a special place in the historiography of the period due to an episode during the war where he allegedly planned to attack London with incendiary cocks .

= = Biography = =

Little is known of Southchurch 's background , but his family came from the manor of Southchurch , now part of Southend @-@ on @-@ Sea . Richard de Southchurch held this manor of the Prior and Convent of Christ 's Church , Canterbury . He also held other land in the county of Essex , including Prittlewell , which he held in fee of the king . He served as sheriff of the combined shrievalties of Essex and Hertfordshire from 27 October 1265 to 12 June 1267 . In 1279 , he received a pardon and was acquitted of a fine of 100 shilling for being present at the theft of a hart at the king 's forest of Chelmsford . In 1289 he was also acquitted of the great sum of 1000 pounds for perjury , in return for releasing the manor of Hatfield Peverel to the king . Southchurch was dead by 2 April 1294 , when the escheator was ordered to deliver his lands to his son and heir , Peter de Southchurch .

= = Involvement in Barons ? War = =

In the mid @-@ 1260s , England found herself in a state of civil war between king Henry III and members of his aristocracy , a conflict known as the Second Barons ' War . In April 1267 , Gilbert de Clare entered London with the baronial forces . The city welcomed him , and king Henry III had to set up camp at Stratford , besieging the capital . Orders were sent out to the sheriffs of Kent and Essex to procure supplies for the royal army . It was in this situation that Southchurch , in his capacity as sheriff , levied requisitions on Chafford Hundred of ;

... oats and wheat , of bacon , beef , cheese and pease , ' pur sustenir le ost au Rey ' ; of chickens to feed the wounded and tow and eggs to make dressings for their wounds and linen for bandages , of chord to make ropes for the catapults , of picks and calthrops and spades to lay low the walls of London , and finally of cocks , forty and more , to whose feet he declared he would tie fire , and send them flying into London to burn it down .

The story survives through the Hundred Rolls , the great survey of the English hundreds made by Edward I , in 1274 @-@ 5 , on returning to his new kingdom from crusade . The scheme , impractical as it might seem , was supposedly based on contemporary sagas of Viking heroes . But the complaints of the local community were based on the fact that Southchurch had taken all the supplies home to his own manor of Southchurch , received 200 marks from the exchequer , yet never paid out any of what the owners of the goods were entitled to .

= = Historical transmission = =

The account of Southchurch 's provisioning was first made available to a wider audience through the writings of the English historian Helen Cam . Cam was responsible for groundbreaking work on the Hundred Rolls , and their relevance to English local government , through her Studies in the Hundred Rolls (1921) and The Hundred and the Hundred Rolls (1930) . In both of these she made mention of what she calls ' ... the most picturesque series of extortions recorded in the Essex returns . ' It was , however , in a paper published in the English Historical Review as early as 1916 that she gave the most detailed account of Southchurch 's plot . Here she traced the dissemination of the Viking legend through Geoffrey of Monmouth , and speculated that Southchurch could have been acquainted with a later version by Gaimar , Wace or Layamon , or through a local , popular legend .

The story was later retold by Sir Maurice Powicke in his King Henry III and the Lord Edward (1947)

. Yet even though both Cam and Powicke had included the tale as a humorous anecdote , it was not until Michael Prestwich wrote his monograph of Edward I in 1988 that anyone considered the possibility that the story of the incendiary roosters was simply a ' confidence trick ' on Southchurch 's part . Powicke , in Prestwich 's words ; ' is to be counted among those who fell for the sheriff 's ruse.'