

REVIEWS

The Romano-British Villa and Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Eccles, Kent: A summary of the excavations by Alec Detsicas with a consideration of the archaeological, historical and linguistic context. By Nick Stoodley and Stephen R. Cosh, with contributions by Jillian Hawkins and Courtney Konshu. 276 pp. Colour and b/w illustrations throughout. Archaeopress Publishing Ltd, Oxford, 2021. Paperback, £45.00. ISBN 9781789695878, Epublication (pdf) ISBN 9781789695885 £15.00.

For over three decades Eccles has been a skeleton rattling in Kent's archaeological tool shed. It has cast a long and salutary shadow; 'We don't want another Eccles' is a watchword whenever a potentially lengthy and complex piece of fieldwork is considered. It is a problem that has particularly troubled Romanists: here was one of the largest and most important Roman building complexes in South-East England yet it remained unpublished beyond Alec Detsicas' interim reports in *Archaeologia Cantiana* (1963-77; 1989). Perhaps less known to the general reader, yet in fact comparatively well-studied, is the Early Medieval cemetery situated alongside the villa. This is already in the public domain in the form of a preliminary report by Rachel Shaw in *Archaeologia Cantiana* but was covered only briefly in Detsicas' series of reports.

In 1986, with the aid of grants from the Kent Archaeological Society, specialist reports as well as drawings of registered finds were commissioned. Fewer than half of these reports were completed, with others either not received or unfinished. In 1999, shortly before his death, with the Eccles project the responsibility of no organisation or person bar himself, Detsicas arranged for the Canterbury Archaeological Trust to take interim custody of the finds until a permanent home could be found. There they were catalogued, and their conservation requirements assessed, and they reside with the Trust to this day while the paper and photographic archives remain in Shaw's care. Most of the human remains were transferred to Bradford University. Efforts made at the time to secure the substantial funding that full publication would require were unsuccessful. News of the impending publication of this volume was therefore met with a degree of surprise in some quarters; it is down to the generosity of the William and Edith Oldham Charitable Trust that the Eccles excavations are finally reaching a wider readership.

The cover title of the volume, *The Romano-British Villa and Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Eccles, Kent*, might lead some to expect full excavation reports on both elements of the site. It is, in fact both less and more than this. The chapter on the cemetery (Ch. 4) is indeed intended to act as a site report, but in the absence of the necessary specialist contributions, there is no pretence at presenting a definitive report on the villa.

For the villa excavations (Ch. 3) Stephen Cosh is reliant on Detsicas' published interim reports supplemented by consultation of archival material. The site is, for

a rural one, complicated. Difficulties arise not only from robbing, truncation and plough damage but from repeated rebuilding and remodelling, particularly of the baths. Some of these complexities seem to be reflected in inconsistencies between some of Detsicas' plans (readily understandable given the site was investigated in seasonal 'bites' rather than continuous open area excavation). Cosh negotiates many difficulties regarding phasing and dating (much of which must remain provisional, particularly in the absence of contextualised finds reports) in order to guide the reader through the development of the buildings from modest house to grand winged-corridor villa with a palatial bath suite. Most significantly, he suggests some alternative phasing for certain elements in the baths. These allow for a decompression of Detsicas' timeline where the end of Period 2 is pushed back as early as possible in order to accommodate the number of changes assumed to have taken place in Period 3. Detsicas himself, it appears, was not yet satisfied with the dating scheme at the time of his death.

Nick Stoodley has a great deal more material to draw on for his report on the Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemetery. Besides Shaw's published catalogue and plan, these include a published (summary) finds report and unpublished inventory by Sonia Hawkes and a raft of post-graduate and other studies of the human remains. He is thus able to present a catalogue integrating both osteological and artefactual evidence as well as discussions of the grave goods, chronology, burial practice and social aspects.

The earliest burials are of the type classified as 'Final Phase', 24 having grave goods dating to the mid-seventh to earlier eighth centuries. Burials continued into the tenth century, by which point it is suggested that it is an example of Hadley's Type 3 cemetery (simple, unbounded and without a church). The challenges here are different. No burial plans were drawn and very few grave cuts were visible owing to the nature of the soils. The total population of the cemetery is unknown, partly because of disturbance caused by intercutting of graves over the cemetery's long life and subsequently by agricultural damage. Shaw's catalogue lists 202 burials plus other groups of disturbed remains but others who have studied these have produced lower figures. An unusually high level of paleopathology was recorded among the Eccles population; a concern is that the discrepancy in numbers of individuals reflects a research-based collection bias which has exaggerated this trend.

The presence of grave goods and the genetic and osteological studies mean that much more can be directly deduced about the Anglo-Saxon population that were buried at Eccles than about the inhabitants of the Roman villa. Although relatively healthy, there seems to have been an exceptional degree of sharp-force trauma weapon injuries both healed and fatal. These derived from both phases of the cemetery, with males in particular suffering cranial trauma and multiple injuries indicative of face-to-face fighting (details listed in an appendix). It is suggested that the earlier traumatic injuries may be connected to the conflict reported by Bede during the expansion of the Kentish kingdom, and the later to Viking attack.

Superficially this seems to be at odds with the low number of burials accompanied by weapons (just three, of which one may be female). It is suggested this may be to do with status as by the seventh century weapon burials had become a symbol of prestige. Even allowing for accompanied burial being on the wane,

the proportion of burials with grave goods at Eccles was low in comparison with contemporary cemeteries at Holborough and Cuxton; this evidence may imply that the community buried here was of low standing. It is also pointed out, however, that levels of health and nutrition were relatively good; the lack of burial wealth may have expressed a cultural decision rather than actual poverty. Chapter 5 considers the non-cemetery evidence of the period: probable boundary ditches upon which the cemetery encroached and which relate to an unlocated settlement and an imperfectly understood post-built structure that stood adjacent to, and probably contemporary with, the cemetery.

These chapters are well-illustrated and colour photographs abound. For the villa, newly drawn, colour-coded plans aid understanding of phasing and the development of the buildings. For the cemetery, various iterations of Shaw's original plan have been digitised and are usefully viewable via either QR scanner or weblinks where they can be enlarged and used to explore the spatial patterning of grave goods, burial plots, genetic groups, and sex and age groups.

The volume is particularly strong on context and, for both periods, Eccles is viewed in the light of other relevant sites, both locally and further afield, while contemporary evidence for settlement in the Medway valley is summarised. Gaps in our knowledge notwithstanding, there is informed speculation about aspects of the villa's economy and ownership and the inevitable discussion of its latest phases in the context of the social and political upheavals of the third and fourth centuries.

The introductory chapter includes consideration of landscape setting, while Chapter 2 covers the Late Iron Age evidence, both on the site, where several phases of ditches (though no settlement focus) preceded the villa and in its hinterlands. Unexpected and particularly welcome is the inter-disciplinary approach exemplified by the inclusion of chapters on place names (Hawkins; Ch. 6) and documentary evidence (Konshuh; Ch. 7). The name *Eccles* indicates the presence of a late Roman Christian community while other place-name evidence suggests the existence of a short-lived British/Romano-British enclave centred on the mouth of the river Medway after the collapse of the Roman administration. These ideas chime with both the tendency for Anglo-Saxon burials to be focussed on older religious foci and, if Germanic people indeed settled the Eccles area relatively late, with the fact that the cemetery at Eccles is also comparatively late in origin.

The final chapter is a sweeping, multi-period discussion of the themes already explored: landscape environment and settlement patterns; burial ritual and religious belief; economy, society and community and territorial and political organisation and is thus a guide to the development of settlement in the Medway valley from the Iron Age to the later Anglo-Saxon period. The authors state, however, 'This project is only intended as the beginning of what is hopefully a new era into research and work on Eccles. In fact, its overriding aim is to emphasise the national importance of the Roman villa and to reenergise efforts to achieve a formal excavation report' (p. 228).

In the meantime, one can only congratulate the authors on having produced such a wide-ranging, stimulating and informative volume that will surely help to bring Eccles to the wider prominence it deserves both in academic circles and amongst a more general readership. Many now and in the future will be rightly thankful to Paul Oldham for commissioning the project. It is a book that delivers more than

its title suggests and it deserves a place on the shelves of all interested in Kent's Roman or Early Medieval archaeology and history.

ELIZABETH BLANNING

The Wandering Herd: The Medieval Cattle Economy of South-East England c.450-1450. By Andrew Margetts. xviii + 272 pp. Windgather Press, 2021. Paperback, £34.99. ISBN 978-1-91118-879-7; epub 978-1-91118-880-3.

This detailed study seeks to highlight the importance of cattle farming during the medieval period in the counties of Sussex, Surrey and Kent, a topic that the author believes has been neglected in favour of studies on sheep and pig pastoral regimes. Adopting the French system of designating the landscape into *pays*, a system Everitt used to great effect for his study of early medieval Kent in 1986, the author explores a range of evidence from across these counties in chapters such as one on place names and another on oval enclosures as landscape features, as well as exploring in depth two case studies in the Sussex Weald at Hayworth and Wickhurst.

Probably not surprisingly, the author concentrates a great deal of attention on the Weald, and to a lesser extent the South Downs with the result that of the counties within his study Sussex is discussed far more fully than either Kent or Surrey, although place-name evidence is used for the latter. Of course, landscape crosses county boundaries, but for the purposes here this review concentrates on his assessment of Kent. The author is keen to stress the value of interdisciplinary studies and the importance of bringing together archaeological (above and below ground, including animal bone assemblages), place-name and documentary evidence which is exemplary, but for Kent this is not developed as fully as it could have been. While acknowledging that Cullen's doctoral thesis does update Wallenberg's two detailed 1930s volumes on the county's place names, because Cullen looked at only two of the Kentish lathes Margetts has chosen to ignore completely place names in Kent within his systematic analysis. This seems a pity because it would have allowed him to look in more detail beyond the Weald and brought in more fully east Kent to his overarching regional analysis.

As well as exploring the landscape through his investigation of routeways and enclosures amongst other features, the author does draw on some documentary evidence, predominantly in the form of charters but as his list of abbreviations highlights, his use of manorial documents is heavily reliant on Sussex material and on customals. This seems a missed opportunity with regard to Kent, not least because Campbell in his chapter in *Later Medieval Kent* (2010) stresses that within the county 'cattle were the most important category of animal stocked.' (p. 34). Although Campbell's assessment is based on primary sources for seigneurial agriculture, it is feasible a sizeable proportion of the peasantry followed similar practices and the limited number of studies on manorial and other documentary sources would generally concur with this view.

The book is attractively illustrated with numerous colour photographs and has a sizeable number of maps and tables. Bearing in mind the considerable use of data from Sussex in his analysis, for those looking more towards what was happening in medieval Kent this book is an interesting addition to works within the Kent

History Project and more localised studies. There is a very extensive bibliography, but an index would have been useful. Overall, the author's enthusiasm for his subject is clearly visible and his book offers a further useful reminder of the role of animal husbandry in medieval society.

SHEILA SWEETINBURGH

Maritime Kent Through the Ages: Gateway to the Sea. Edited by Stuart Bligh, Elizabeth Edwards and Sheila Sweetinburgh. 588 pp., 24 b/w and 32 colour illustrations, and 5 tables. The Boydell Press, 2021. Hardback, £50. ISBN 9781783276257, Ebook (EPDF) £19.99, ISBN 9781800103054.

As the editors of this illuminating volume argue a book focused on Kent's maritime history was long overdue. The book is structured through a series of themes which explore Kent's maritime past.

The book opens with an engaging chapter on *topography* by Chris Young. This chapter provides the necessary context to understanding how the evolution of Kent's climate and coastline shaped the county's maritime past and continues to affect its present. The longshore drift, for example, encouraged the development of spits and shingle deposits that in turn affected access to some of Kent's harbours.

The section on *defence* covers the Roman occupation of Kent and the development of the Saxon Shore Forts, to the period after the Napoleonic Wars. As demonstrated in the chapters by Adrian Jobson and Christopher Ware, in order to provide effective defence against seaborne invaders it was necessary for naval operations at sea to be supported by strategically placed fortifications. As Andrew Lambert argues, from 1815-1865 Kent's forts, Martello Towers, and harbours of refuge combined with royal dockyards and a large fleet, facilitated English dominance of the English Channel, North Sea, and the Baltic.

The section on *trade and industry* demonstrates Kent's importance in national and overseas trade from Roman times to the present day. Elizabeth Blanning shows the short crossing from Kent to Roman Gaul meant the county became the conduit for the spread of Roman culture across Britain, and an important centre of trade. Andrew Richardson's chapter also demonstrates that Kent's favourable geographic position enabled the county to thrive after Rome's legions left. Archaeological finds, for example, show that from the fifth to seventh centuries Kent's population became consumers of goods imported from Francia, Frisia and Scandinavia and, conversely, exported commodities to the continent. The chapter by Maryanne Kowaleski demonstrates the importance of Kent's ports in the late middle ages. From 1478-82 Sandwich, and its associated Kent ports, controlled over five per cent of the value of the nation's overseas trade. The chapter by Jane Andrewes examines trade and industry over two centuries (1500-1700). Kent's proximity to London, in addition to the location of key naval bases, ensured that the county's overseas and coastal trades increased, while traditional industries such as fishing continued to play an important role in the economic life of the county. David Killingray's chapter on trade and industry after 1700 demonstrates how environmental change, population growth, and expanding maritime trade, both seaborne and riverine, led to infrastructure developments that enabled Kent's industries to expand.

Gillian Draper begins the section on *coastal communities* by examining the Cinque Ports in the middle ages. Draper demonstrates how the freedoms and privileges enjoyed by the Cinque Ports created an early form of self-government. The Chapter by Ben Marsh and David Killingray is most welcome. Here they discuss the increasing diversity of Kent's population, a development encouraged by expanding overseas trade, the Atlantic slave trade, and other colonial initiatives. Next Sandra Dunster argues that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the inhabitants of Kent's coastal zone developed a distinctive identity. In the following chapter Elizabeth Edward's shows that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Kent's population expanded due to the advent of the railway, the expansion of the naval dockyards, and the development of some towns into seaside resorts.

The last section of the book focuses on a series of enriched case studies. Susan Rose's chapter investigates the importance of Sandwich in the later middle ages. It is sometimes easy to forget how important Sandwich used to be, but the chapters by Jobson, Kowaleski, and Rose remind readers that it was once a key trading hub, and central to the crown's martial and diplomatic endeavours. Sheila Sweetinburgh's chapter focuses attention on Hythe fishing families in the late middle ages through a close study of the Stace family. Sweetinburgh draws on evidence from local records to show the types and quantities of fish that were caught, the inheritance strategies of fishers, and the role women played in such communities. In the next chapter Melanie Caiazza uses a sample of 1,400 probate records to analyse the cultural and religious diversity of Sheppey's communities in the Tudor period. Gill Wyatt builds on Caiazza's chapter by examining early modern Thanet. Wyatt demonstrates how industries such as farming and fishing, in addition to migration, marriage and kinship networks connected Thanet to the mainland and the Continent. Claire Bartram's chapter takes us into the world of cultural geography by looking at references to Dover in early modern poetry and literature. Dover frequently appears as a safe harbour, but also a start or end point for important events such as Henry VIII's embarkation to the Field of the Cloth of Gold and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton uses literature to remind us that seaside resorts were often liminal spaces where the upper classes rubbed shoulders with those lower down the social order, a practice that created some consternation among Victorian writers. The final chapter by Jo Stanley focuses on the lives of women in Dover in the First World War. Stanley examines the writings of Helen Beale, a thirty-two year old Women's Royal Service officer. As Stanley shows, her writings allow us to look at Kent's maritime history through the lens of emotions.

The synergy of archaeologists, geographers, literary scholars, and historians marks this book as an important addition to existing scholarship. Taken together the authors show Kent acted as a conduit of social, cultural, and economic exchange, and was often at the forefront of the nation's defence. These chapters, therefore, centre Kent's maritime past (and present) within a wider national narrative. As noted by Margarette Lincoln in the Afterword, 'this volume is a milestone and points the way to future studies'.

CRAIG LAMBERT

'An obscure and inconsiderable parish': A History of Frittenden. By Phil Betts. xii + 307 pp, 16 colour and b/w plates. Canterley Publishing, 2021. Hardback, £17 plus p&p via the Frittenden Historical Society: website, frittendenhistoricalsociety.co.uk/publications or direct from the author, email pfjb21@outlook.com. ISBN 978-1-7399928-0-4

Local histories come in many forms often reflecting the particular interests of their compilers, but the majority originate in enthusiasm for, and attachment to, their location. In this respect, Phil Betts' study of Frittenden is no different, but as an exemplar of local history writing it stands out as something more exceptional.

The introductory chapters bring out clearly the link between topography of the Lower Weald and early, Anglo-Saxon, scattered demesne settlements most of which later developed into manors and eventually became the parish of Frittenden. The majority are now only remembered and identified in local site names. It would appear that it was with the building of the Norman church of St Mary, perhaps replacing an earlier Saxon building, that the manors began to cohere into a defined settlement which was to be much influenced by the proximity of the wealthy and large wool town of Cranbrook. The impact of the Black Death in the middle of the fourteenth century and the Peasants Revolt in 1380, challenging the political status quo as wage labour grew stronger, together with Jack Cade's Rebellion seventy years later, were all important events closely involving the population of Wealden parishes. Betts' handling of the wider social, economic and political issues in that troubled century helps to draw a picture of life in the Weald, and ensures the reader is aware that however 'obscure' and 'inconsiderable' Frittenden may have been, its inhabitants were (and are) as much part of the Weald as others.

These early chapters are very important for interpretations of later periods which benefit from an almost forensic research and analysis by Betts into all the available records. The local resident reading this book will no doubt find details of names, places, occupations, local organisations and events, inter alia, fascinating, but the outsider might gloss over the names as the characters in the building of a quasi-Brueghelian complete picture where each small grouping adds something to the whole.

The core of the book is an impressive discussion of the development of the modern parish throughout the nineteenth century and centres much around the life, career and influence of the rector (1848-69), Edward Moore, and then of his successors. The grandson of an archbishop of Canterbury of originally humble origins, Moore had a very privileged upbringing and married into the aristocracy, thereby cementing his social status. Once established in Frittenden he made many changes to the built fabric of the village starting with a rebuild of the Rectory (*Frittenden House*) and then updating the church and eventually became the largest resident landowner in the parish, making improvements (sometimes resisted) and opening a National School in the 1850s. Although the dominance of one man, who was the leading name in all the committees and organisations he was involved with, does not fit well with modern ideas of rural communities, there is no doubt that Frittenden owes much of its modern structure to the activities of Edward Moore.

The latter part of the book deals more briefly with the twentieth century up to c.1974 when Local Government was restructured. Betts has divided this period

into four main parts: The First World War, the inter-war years, the Second World War, and the post-war period. They make fascinating reading and, for the first time in the study, a clearer picture emerges of the role of women and many are mentioned by name for the first time. The details of war service and other activities are recorded in the eleven comprehensive appendices which cover much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and provide a valuable resource for other local historians. Although the twentieth century is dealt with more briefly than the nineteenth-century story, Betts does cover all the minutiae of twentieth-century developments including post office, water supply, a multi-functional public house, public transport and other services. And the underlying theme running throughout the book is the crucial role of agriculture, its supporting services and industries, and the people who grew up, lived and worked in the parish.

There is a useful index, a comprehensive bibliography and a rather strange format for footnoting with all notes numbered from i to dxxxv throughout the book and listed after the appendices. Short textual commentaries are usefully included as arabic numbered footnotes within the main text. The only thing that is missing in this thorough and very accessible read is one, or perhaps even two, supporting, explanatory maps.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS

50 Finds from Kent: Objects from the Portable Antiquities Scheme. By Jo Ahmet. 96pp, illustrations throughout. Amberly Publishing, 2021. Paperback, £15.99, Kindle £12.90. ISBN 9781445697826.

The 50 Finds series of books highlight Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) discoveries from different counties, putting these into their historical and archaeological contexts. Like its companions, *50 Finds From Kent*, authored by Kent Finds Liaison Officer, Jo Ahmet, has written an attractively produced and profusely illustrated volume.

The book is organised chronologically, from the Stone Age to the post-Medieval periods. A brief word sketch of each period, supplemented by artistic reconstructions, maps and photographs, is followed by a selection of finds. This is wide ranging and not confined to the small metallic finds one tends to associate with the scheme. Although these dominate, we also find worked flints, samian pottery, even an Anglo-Saxon leather shoe and a complete Roman quernstone. Headlining finds, such as the Bronze Age Ringlemere gold cup and the Late Iron Age Bridge helmet, rub shoulders with humbler objects and the lost small change of centuries. All of these are used to illustrate aspects of life and society at the time they were used.

As one might expect, given the author's specialist interests, Anglo-Saxon jewellery is interestingly covered with a useful visual timeline of changing styles and examples of uncommon Frankish finds.

Unfortunately, the illustrations have no scale, making it hard to judge the size of some items. However, this appears to be an editorial decision common to the whole series.

In all, this is an enjoyable and informative journey through Kent's long history

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via the medium of lost possessions. One hopes it may open more eyes to the value of artefacts as sources of archaeological information and, indeed, the value of the Portable Antiquities Scheme itself. This, through the nearly 1.5 million objects now recorded nationally, is transforming our understanding of various topics (such as Viking and Anglo-Saxon landscapes and economy) and is providing a vast resource for further research.