



Kent Academic Repository

Rebecca, Warren (2017) *Sheila Sweetinburgh (ed.). Early Medieval Kent. Review of: Early Medieval Kent by UNSPECIFIED. Archaeologia Cantiana, 138 . pp. 314-315. ISSN 0066-5894.*

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/85791/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://kentarchaeology.org.uk/node/78546>

This document version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

UNSPECIFIED

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal* , Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

Early Medieval Kent 800-1220

Review for: *Archaeologia Cantiana* (KAS, vol. 138 (2017))

Rebecca Warren

This book is the tenth publication in the Kent History Project and is a companion to *Later Medieval Kent*, which was published in 2010. Both volumes provide much-needed syntheses of current historical and archaeological research into Kent's rich and fascinating history. *Early Medieval Kent* is particularly welcome for finally opening up the complex and more inaccessible history of the county before the Norman Conquest, which still forms a natural watershed in historical writing. In this, it is highly successful, drawing out the numerous social, religious and material continuities which are often lost in narratives of the impact of the invasion from Normandy in 1066.

Early Medieval Kent opens with a helpful introductory essay by the editor, Sheila Sweetinburgh, which provides an overview of changes in lordship, rural and urban settlement patterns, and the development of the church in Kent, all themes which underpin much of the detailed research in the following eleven chapters. The book closes with an extremely thorough and invaluable bibliography of medieval Kent history, which will be welcomed by scholars and more general readers alike.

Chapters One to Four offer a valuable and coherent picture of the pattern of development in Kent, starting with Andrew Richardson's first-class synthesis of research into the county's development before AD800. Richardson's use of a range of evidence, especially archaeological finds, early charters and surviving place-names, is

accompanied by a sensitive interpretation of current ideas, which replaces the former ‘Jutish’ foundation myth of Kent with a more nuanced and carefully argued series of possibilities that reflect the available evidence. This is followed by two detailed essays by Gill Draper on early colonisation and the development of towns, which draw on an impressive range of evidence, including the Domesday Book and the *Textus Roffensis*, to demonstrate how the county’s landscape influenced its subsequent settlement. Her examination of urban development reinforces this analysis, providing fascinating detail on the development of trade and industry in individual towns, including some smaller settlements in north and central Kent and Romney Marsh.

Stuart Brookes focuses on the two phases of ‘Viking age’ Kent, examining both the impact of the raids themselves and the responses of the population to these events. Openly acknowledging that much of the county’s development in the ninth to eleventh centuries was not necessarily directly linked to Viking incursions, he nevertheless provides a compelling account of the military responses of local and regional leaders to the Norse raids, drawing on evidence from charters, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* the *Burghal Hidage*, place-names and coinage, and outlining the gradual absorption of the county into the kingdoms of Mercia and then Wessex.

Viking Kent is followed by an elegant essay by Hilary Powell, which reinterprets evidence from early hagiography to illuminate the relationship between saints’ cults and the early religious foundations from which they originated. Charting their relationship with the landscapes of Kent, she then demonstrates how these early localised saints were either abandoned with the arrival of the Normans or were

increasing assimilated by the monastic houses, their miracles re-apportioned from the experience of the laity to that of the religious, until their recognition as monastic assets was superseded again by the major cult of St Thomas Becket.

Chapter Six provides a fascinating examination of five early charters of Canterbury cathedral, one from each of the seventh to eleventh centuries. Nicely illustrated, this short examination demonstrates how much can be gleaned from the subject, form and meaning of these manuscripts to illuminate early medieval life in Kent and beyond. Of particular interest are the conclusions that these charters show some of the complexity of Kent's relationships with its overlords beyond the county's boundaries and the astonishingly variable quality of scribal literacy during this early period.

Diane Heath and Mary Berg then consider aspects of the church, covering monastic culture and the influence of Anglo-Norman patronage on churches in Kent. Berg suggests that Norman architecture was initially intended to reinforce their political dominance, and charts the close links maintained by those who held lands in both Normandy and England, which promoted the spread of Norman influences in English ecclesiastical architecture.

Berg then collaborates with Paul Bennett to consider the history of Canterbury in the eleventh century, moving from the Viking siege of 1011 to the Norman Conquest of 1066, and providing a detailed analysis of the physical state of the city before and after these events. This is followed by Jake Weekes' synthesis of detailed archaeological evidence with William Urry's well-known reconstruction of the topography of the

Canterbury in the twelfth century. This essay considers in particular the methodological problems of the task, highlighting the difficulty of drawing robust conclusions from the fragmentary archaeological data which often results from piecemeal urban development, and provides a useful reminder that collating disparate evidence is a complex and problematic process.

The problems of interpreting patchy evidence are also acknowledged in a short but clear essay by John Cotter on Kentish pottery, which summarises the current state of knowledge on this often ephemeral material, noting three broad categories of ceramics and their relative distribution across the county. The final chapter considers an entirely different body of evidence, that of Kentish place-names. Compiled by Sheila Sweetinburgh from research by Paul Cullen, this provides a fascinating list of components of place-names, with their etymology and modern examples of their use with which many readers will be familiar, besides one or two detailed analyses of individual river names, including the Beult and the Stour.

Early Medieval Kent is a very valuable and timely contribution to Kentish history. Inevitably there is some cross-over and repetition of events between some essays, which is most apparent when reading the volume as a single work. Most readers are unlikely to treat this volume in this way, however, and there is such richness in the contents that this drawback is worth overlooking in what is otherwise a compelling and fascinating collection.