REVIEWS

KINGDOM, CIVITAS & COUNTY –
THE EVOLUTION OF TERRITORIAL
IDENTITY IN THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE
Stephen Rippon.
Published by Oxford University Press, 2018.
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This is a very necessary piece of work that builds and enlarges upon the extensive variety of contemporary specialist evidence – archaeological, topographical, geological, linguistic and paleo-environmental – that allows what is described as the Anglo-Saxon settlement or the creation of Anglo-Saxon England to be reinterpreted.

It is now generally accepted that the traditional image first articulated by the Venerable Bede in AD731 of invading Angles, Saxons and Jutes obliterating the Romano-British from the territory that later became known as England in an orgy of ethnic cleansing is a poor statement for what actually took place. This book, which is focused upon Eastern England, adds to the developing picture that whilst there was migration from northern Europe probably before, but certainly during and immediately after the collapse of Roman rule in Britain, this lengthy process did not displace or wipe out the existing population. In fact, the evidence suggests these migrants augmented the native population, liked them so much that they stayed, intermingled, and, in the eventual absence of any other competent elite, took to ruling it.

Over the last thirty or so years there has been a sequence of learned publications developing this theme and Rippon has dissected each to marshal this now massive collection of data into a coherent format. The seventy-two-page bibliography is extensive, amply demonstrating the detail and the discipline that has gone into this thorough work.

The fundamental issue in understanding the Anglo-Saxon settlement has been the poverty of historical evidence and its interpretation. This has led to romantic and foolish assertions among even contemporary commentators. We all love a good yarn and when little is actually known it is very easy to get carried away. We can all be reassured however, that Stephen Rippon is no romantic, but a solid student of the evidence. This does at times lead to a writing style best described as heavy duty, and at one point this reviewer feared that the erstwhile Rippon had swallowed a mid-twentieth century sociology text book, but he stacks the evidence tightly within a useful, well-catalogued framework. Intense, is a good description.

Stephen Rippon presents the hypothesis first articulated in `The Fields of Britannia – Continuity and Change in the Late Roman and Early Medieval Landscape' (pub. OUP 2015) by Stephen Rippon, Chris Smart, and Ben Pears, that there was continuity in land use and occupation in Britain throughout the transition following the end of Roman rule in Britain and the eventual creation of an Anglo-Saxon hegemony in the 7th century.

Interestingly, Rippon begins his argument in the late Iron Age period just when local, native political and administrative units, such as the Catuvellauni and the Trinovantes, were developing into nascent kingdoms, probably as a consequence of the growing centralising authority of Rome appearing on their doorstep. Rippon convincingly argues that such kingdoms were superimposed on the back of underlying community-based, `socio-economic spheres of interaction' that were durable, stable and founded in established custom and practise. It is a distinct pleasure to find another rational, intelligent creature who understands society to be a construct of co-operation from the bottom up, rather than enforced from the top down. It is true, tanistry is us!

Rippon argues that these structures of social and economic mutuality ensured the eventual development across Eastern England of territorial polities during the late Iron Age, the Roman and early medieval periods. His argument is that these territories were largely based on the best, cultivable soils given the prevailing technologies and knowledge. This meant that the boundaries that defined those territories tended to be in the sparsely settled areas, such as watersheds and districts with heavy

clay soils which were more difficult to cultivate.

He postulates four regions that comprise Eastern England. These are the North-West Thames Basin, the North-East Thames Basin, East Anglia and the South-East Midlands. These regions cover the existing counties of Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Middlesex. He sets out to define the reasons that qualify this model. He examines the distribution of pottery, brooches, loom-weights and coinage within each region. He identifies between the regions the relevant stylistic differences such portable materials always display. He outlines the critical variety found in settlement patterns and how each region evolved from its Iron Age identity into a Roman 'civitas'.

Rippon tackles the homogeneity of Romanisation head-on by describing the multiple identities that prevailed beneath the accepted behaviour of the ruling elites loyal to Rome. The 'civitas' were legitimised by the visual conformity of local ruling families continuing their social leadership by becoming magistrates to collect the taxes for the provincial authorities. Despite that, each region responded differently to what was an imported Roman culture. In East Anglia, urban development was small, implying a dislike, whereas in the North-West Thames Basin there was the burgeoning city of Verulamium with other small towns and local economic centres. In the North-East Thames Basin, there was Colchester and other local centres but a distinct dearth of small towns particularly in the south, whereas the South-East Midlands enjoyed a selection of well-defended small towns. It is of interest to note that rural Romano-British temples seem in more ways than one to be the liminal boundaries of such 'civitas'.

The collapse of Roman rule in Britain caused an immediate crisis in authority. Yet the paleo-environmental record shows that lowland arable farming remained constant throughout the Roman and early medieval periods. Woodland use did expand from 26% of land area suggesting some abandonment, but the paleo-environmental record shows that it did not go higher than 33%. The argument that agricultural land under Roman rule quickly reverted to woodland as a result of abandonment might be the case in specific areas such as Whittlewood, but generally speaking it did not happen. What is more with the end of Roman rule,

whilst the amount of improved pasture diminished to become rough pasture, the total amount of pasture available for cattle-ranching and other livestock practises remained broadly constant. An absence of rulers does not mean a population has either been put to the sword or driven off into some western twilight. The strong suggestion is that everyday life carried on regardless, even though in the historical sense nobody was seen to be in charge.

Rippon also produces some interesting data as to the distribution of Grubenhauser or grub-huts as they are sadly but colloquially known. These are a clear statement of Germanic settlement as they mirror similar buildings already identified in northern Europe. Rippon has a preference to describing these 'shallow, sub-rectangular, steep-sided and flat bottom pits above which was probably constructed a suspended wooden floor' as sunken-featured buildings or SFB for short. These are not to be confused with cellars with revetted sides and entrance stairways.

He makes it clear that these SFB are found right across East Anglia. They are not to be found, however, in the clay-lands of the South-East Midlands and the North-East Thames Basin. Whilst they can also be found along the valley of the river Great Ouse and the chalk-lands of the South-East Midlands they are invariably rare across the North Thames Basin, only existing in coastal locations. The distribution of Anglo-Saxon burials between the 5th and 6th centuries is not dissimilar, although by the 7th century what are deemed Anglo-Saxon burials become far more widespread, but this could be due to the wider acceptance of Christian belief within a society undergoing a broader cultural transformation.

Rippon is successful in navigating his complex argument through the massive amount of available data. The continuity of Iron Age political structures transforming into Roman 'civitas' is largely accepted and we can thank Rippon for confirming it. It is also accepted that there was no political continuity from the Roman period into the later Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, but Rippon has managed to establish a continuity through this period of social and economic activities driven by environmental determinism and native custom. This shows that an indigenous British population persisted in Eastern England throughout the entire period of the Anglo-Saxon settlement.

In many ways, Rippon has finally proved a point that has been extant for some while now. The sort of demographic disaster postulated previously as being the fate of the native British in Eastern England did not stand up to the logistical exigencies of transporting entire tribes of men, women and children complete with livestock from the coast of northern Europe across the often-treacherous waters of the North Sea in open boats in all seasons. We have every reason to be grateful to Stephen Rippon for the time and trouble he has expended in this work. He has proved the point and his model of analysis that cuts across pre-determined specialisms has opened new ground for further enquiry.

On a personal note, it has been a delight for this reviewer to see an attribution to the work done by the Land Utilisation Survey headed by Professor Dudley-Stamp and Dr Christie Willatts that reported in 1948 as 'The Land of Britain – Its Use and Misuse'. My late mother Eunice Wilson, née Bicknell, worked as Chief Cartographer to the Survey and in the course of events met my father, the late Leslie Wilson who was one of the undergraduate researchers employed in collecting the necessary data. The disaster of the Second World War disrupted the Survey and the lives of those involved, so that outcomes were not as preferred. Dr Willatts had distinct opinions as to the positive virtues of good cartographic illustration. My mother's professional life lasted into the beginning of computerised cartography but I was never ever able to get her to be enthusiastic about it. Sadly, the computerised maps in this volume fail to meet Dr Willatt's exacting standards, but the reproduction on page 269 of Mortimer Wheeler's famous 1935 map of a suggested 'sub-Roman triangle' north of London goes a long way in compensation. I beg modern cartographers to look at it carefully, admire its simple exuberance and seek to restore that standard in any and every future publication.

This book makes a very solid and determined contribution to make sense and add clarity to what are important parts of our nation's early history. I sense the subsequent work of history will take time to appear but we can be assured that this mighty tome will have made that more likely. At GBP 85.00 this is a specialist purchase but it need be the only one on Eastern England the specialist has to buy.

Nigel Robert Wilson

SACRED BRITANNIA: THE GODS AND RITUALS OF ROMAN BRITAIN
Miranda Aldhouse-Green.
Published by Thames & Hudson 2018.
ISBN978-0-500-25222-2. Price GBP 19.95.

This is a lovely book. It is not an academic book, at least not until Chapter 11, but it is a work of enthusiasm and there is no better instructor than someone who adores their subject.

Miranda Aldhouse-Green is no stranger if you have studied the Romans in Britain. She pops up all over the place to explain memorials, inscriptions, artefacts and the names of obscure deities. One gets a distinct feeling that she has had tea and conversation with the Roman individuals who populate this book as she is clearly interested in their lives. The sense of a common humanity pervades the writing which draws the reader into a communion with both the text and its substance.

To the specialist in Roman belief there is nothing new here other than a reinterpretation of Roman religion in Britain, but context is everything. The idea that Britain was a magical isle beyond the river Oceanus that surrounded the world that the Romans ruled lies at the root of Roman attitudes to the British. This perception is why the Emperor Claudius invaded to prove his divine genius and underpinned the eventual acceptance that here was the final frontier of Rome in the north and west.

The absence of written records about Iron Age beliefs in Britain has left the field clear to Roman commentators to construct our view of the druids and their role in society. This cannot be an objective interpretation, but the implication is that where the druids accepted the Roman way of doing things, they were quite probably left alone to get on with their ritual and worship. In other words, the story of belief in Roman Britain is about accepting the Roman right to rule, best described as 'romanitas', so that the imperial deities are given due recognition and the Roman pantheon conflated with local, tribal deities.

Given the concentration of the Roman military in the provinces of Britannia, the beliefs of the many regiments and companies are well illustrated. The number of divinities imported in this way is significant and quite possibly, in the areas of high military concentration such as Hadrian's Wall, they obscured or even obliterated the deities of local tribes who were often relocated to places

of less strategic importance. Yet the British, and it would seem Gaulish, appreciation of ambiguity, shape-shifting and the number three in religious matters manages to seep subversively into just about every other nook and cranny of belief.

The advent of eastern mystery cults such as Mithraism, Dolichenus and Serapism are given special comment, as these are very specific cults imported as a consequence of Britain being part of the Roman Empire. The advent of Christianity falls into much the same category and is given a chapter all to itself, although prior to the conversion of the Empire by Constantine very little is known about the extent of Christian belief in Britain. There is clear evidence that in a number of places, Christian worship replaced pagan rituals, which is only to be expected.

Chapter 11 is a complex exploration of belief, politics, authority and their acceptance by the wider population. The narrative challenges accepted interpretations, even suggesting that Sulis, the deity that gave Bath its Roman name, might have been invented. Also, that in some places the god Mercury may have for a period been conflated with Christ. These are questions that cannot be answered within the modern context, but the writer tells us that where syncretism appears to have taken place it should accepted on the understanding that different aspects of such conflated deities may have had specific relevance to different worshippers. She draws our attention to more modern syncretic forms to clarify the point. It is this understanding of religious belief as a phenomenon that runs through all culture in all ages that adds value to the context of this book.

Aldhouse-Green concludes that despite the heavy-hand of 'romanitas', a British cultural identity pervaded throughout the period of Roman dominion in Britain, sometimes pushing at the boundaries of established belief whilst usually remaining just inside what the authorities could tolerate.

Nigel Robert Wilson

WULFHERE'S PEOPLE: A CONVERSION-PE-RIOD ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT WOLVERTON, MILTON KEYNES
Alastair Hancock & Bob Zeepvat
Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society
Monograph 11 (2018). ISBN 978-0-99557177-4-9.
154pp, 146 figs. Paperback £18

'Wulfhere's People' sees a welcome revival of the Society's Milton Keynes monograph series which between 1987 and 1996 published ten volumes covering the major investigations undertaken by the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit. One of the authors (Bob Zeepvat) was one of the MKAU's leading figures and this report maintains the care, quality and precision that we came to expect from that team.

The monograph covers the excavation by Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd in 2008 of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery in what was then the grounds of the Radcliffe School, Wolverton. Open-area excavation revealed 76 graves containing 80 inhumation burials as well as five empty graves, two urned cremations, two possible cremations and a scattering of non-funerary ditches, gullies pits and post-holes. The cemetery is dated by grave-goods and radiocarbon to the late 6th to 7th centuries AD. The non-funerary features are not well dated, but some at least may belong with the small quantity of abraded 1st century AD pottery recovered – this was only other period represented.

Wolverton and its environs are well-known as a favoured location for settlement from prehistoric to medieval times. Neolithic cursus monuments were found during gravel extraction for the Park's Trust's new floodplain forest, several Bronze Age ring ditches have been investigated, there was an Iron Age settlement at Bancroft, Roman villas were built at Bancroft and Cosgrove and a temple at Old Stratford. Wolverton itself was well established by the 11th century, although the village and its castle were later depopulated. The book's title is taken from the place-name which is translated as 'Wulfhere's estate'.

It therefore comes as no surprise that archaeological evaluation is required by the council's archaeology adviser before sites around Wolverton can be developed. However, Anglo-Saxon cemeteries comprising a dispersed scatter of graves can be elusive because it is all too easy for trial

trenches to miss the graves and find little of significance in the gaps between. Fortunately in this case a single grave, initially thought to be prehistoric, was enough to trigger at first a modest extension of the investigation and after that the stripping of almost one hectare.

Whilst the cemetery lacked obvious boundary features it does have a fairly well-defined edge to the north and west but clearly extended further south and probably east too, so we do not yet know how big it was. The plan is nothing like what one would expect of later (Christian) cemeteries. Burials were scattered around with much empty space between them, there are few obvious clusters and little consistency in orientation. Burial rites were variable too with multiple, prone and crouched inhumations as well as the cremations. There are though a few distinctive features that drew this reviewer's attention: a copper-alloy workbox with runic inscription, a four-post structure surrounded by four inhumations, a middle-aged woman who (like me) suffered from ankylosing spondylitis and was buried with a collection of fossils and other geological specimens. One cannot help but wonder at the long-lost motivations, beliefs and superstitions behind such curiosities.

The longest section of the report is given over to a meticulous, systematic and well-illustrated catalogue of each grave which will be invaluable for anyone seeking to use it for comparative studies. This is followed by study of the skeletons and human pathology by Harriett Anne Jacklin, although unfortunately the population is too small for reliable statistical analysis. This reviewer claims no expertise in human osteology, but it is notable that the cemetery contained 50% more identifiable females than males, and that hardly anyone seemingly survived beyond their 5oth birthday. Unsurprisingly, dental health was poor and osteoarthritis a problem for almost 12% of adults. Fractures seemed quite rare (<4%), but one older male had been violently killed by a weapon thrust into the back of his cranium.

The report on the artefacts (almost all grave goods) is similarly meticulous. They comprised a wide range of personal items and jewellery, 38 knives, 3 seaxes, 5 spears (one buried with a woman), just a single sword and no shield bosses. Less usual items included a balance, a hanging bowl escutcheon, a pennanular brooch and the workbox and fossils noted previously. Fragments of linen and woollen cloth survived adhering to some of the metal finds.

Understanding what happened between the end of Roman Britain and the emergence of medieval England is one of the great themes of British archaeology and why discoveries such as this one have wider significance. Together with investigations at Wolverton Turn, previously published in *Records*, this report goes a long way towards bridging that gap locally. We can now see that a settlement and burial ground was well-established in the 7th century and that the community grew into the medieval village, although what happened in the 5th and 6th centuries is still poorly defined.

A final hint at the future is given by the preliminary report on DNA analysis of a single skeleton with the final report promised for a future issue of Records. In the last decade, studies of ancient DNA have revolutionised our understanding of human evolution and early prehistoric migrations. Less has been done on historical periods but the potential is vast and a reminder of why it is so important to retain human remains for research.

Sandy Kidd

THE TOLL ROADS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
1706–1881
By Peter Gulland
Published by the Buchinghamshire
Archaeological Society, 2017.
ISBN 978-0-995717-3-2. Price £12

Few of us have much knowledge of how the main roads in Buckinghamshire came about. We will have absorbed in history lessons at school the idea that the Romans built nice straight roads like Watling Street, now the A5, and the A41 Akeman Street. If old enough, we will have been eye-witness to the construction of the by-passes and motorways built for modern motor traffic. Of the intervening sixteen centuries between the tramp of Caesar's legions and the present day grind of 40-ton motor trucks, most of us would be able to drag up nothing more from half-remembered school lessons than perhaps the names of John McAdam and Thomas Telford. Now we can fill this gap, for we have available *The Tolls of Buckinghamshire 1706–1881*, the product of eight years of research carried out by Peter Gulland, retired town planner, historical

geographer, and long-time member of the Buck-inghamshire Archaeological Society.

Peter Gulland has sought out written records in county and national archive collections and done fieldwork around the county, to get a full picture of the work of the turnpike trusts and the development of the toll road system in the county. In Part 1 of his book, he explains the work of the twenty-four trusts that were established by Acts of Parliament through the 18th and 19th centuries to operate within Bucks. Their purpose was to take responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of defined sections of the road along a major route way. They were authorised to raise loans to finance work in their sections and to draw an income by collecting tolls. Parishes along a toll road might be required to supply labour to a trust for carrying out repairs, though trusts increasingly tended to hire their own teams of labourers. In the earlier period of their operations, trusts only did simple maintenance work, but later in the 19th century they became increasingly concerned to improve the quality of the road, with hardcore to greater depths and the provision of a superior metalled surface, while the carriageway might be widened and gradients made less steep.

Trust members were drawn, predictably, from the landowning, professional and business classes; periodically – in theory once every three months – they were supposed to meet to transact the business of the trust, though it seems the diligence of the members often fell short and rates of attendance at meetings could be poor. Meetings were held in some suitable inn and rounded off with a lunch; we might guess that these could be jovial and convivial affairs at which more ale was consumed than business transacted. The trustees were served by a clerk, a treasurer and one or more surveyors. No doubt for the most part, officers and trustees were honest enough men, but Peter does record a number of instances of dishonesty, misuse of finding, incompetence, and corruption.

The maps on pages 12 and 34 show the complete turnpike network as it was in 1836. Turnpikes had developed haphazardly through the 18th century, with no central co-ordinating plan from central government, but it is clear that a system had nevertheless been created, with main roads extending through the county out from London, while each major town such as Aylesbury, Buckingham and Newport Pagnell was a hub from which turnpikes

radiated. In 1836 there were 42 tollgates averaging 5.5 miles apart, and 23 sidebars or chains at turnings off the turnpike, erected specifically to deter tollgate avoiders. Most of the turnpikes had been pre-existing routes and were improved by the trusts, with only 10% completely new constructions. The busiest roads are shown on the map on page 46: traffic densities, estimated from toll incomes per mile, were predictably highest in 1836 on the main roads from London, while the least busy were the cross-routes in the Chilterns, for example between Amersham and Marlow.

What is striking about this network of toll roads is that it coincides almost perfectly with the present-day pattern of 'A' and 'B' roads in the county. How did this come about? Peter explains that by the 1870s, trusts had become increasingly burdened by debts arising from loans raised to carry out road improvements and at the same time were suffering from declining toll revenues as passenger and goods traffic transferred to the newly-established railways. One by one the trusts were wound up and their assets sold off. The graph on page 57 shows the abrupt fall during the 1870s in the total mileage of turnpike roads in the county. Responsibility for the roads passed first to local highway boards and then in the 1890s to county councils. In the 20th century there was an upsurge in road traffic with the advent of the internal combustion engine. When the 'A' and 'B' classification of roads was introduced, Peter notes that 78% of the mileage of 'A' roads in the county had formerly been turnpike roads.

Part 2 of the book is divided into 24 sections, one for each of the turnpike trusts in the county. They are described in the date order of their establishment by Act of Parliament, starting with the Hockliffe and Stratford turnpike in 1706. Peter provides a complete history of each turnpike, with a description of the route across the local topography and its passage through the towns and villages. There are full details of every improvement made by the trusts along the route, generally illustrated by maps. He lists and describes locations of toll gates and toll houses, weighing engines, chains and sidebars. There are entries giving some details of more prominent trustee chairmen and officials. The initial Acts of Parliament and the Continuation Acts are recorded. At the end of each section are details of that final moment when the trust was wound up.

The book ends with two appendices giving the mileages and toll income of each trust in 1836 and listing details of tollgates, sidebars and weighing machines in that year, along with the road classification determined in 1919. There is a comprehensive list of sources and references; the index was compiled by Peter's wife Diana, who herself had accompanied him on fieldwork trips searching out the sites of toll houses and milestones.

This book is no mere chronicle and catalogue of the affairs and assets of turnpike trusts. On every page the casual reader and serious researcher will find items of interest and value. How often have I driven along the A41 between Tring and Aston Clinton and wondered about the low cliffs of exposed chalk on each side of the carriageway produced by the excavation of a cutting through the local rock? Why is it that the A413 seems to "decapitate" the village of Padbury, leaving the church and manor house on one side of the road, cut off from the main street of the village on the other side of the road? How appalling that in 1773, five trustees of the Colnbrook Turnpike died of poisoning from verdigris-polluted soup served at the trustee meeting in a local hostelry. There were murders: in 1822 the toll keeper and his wife just outside Aylesbury were killed by a thief taking £5. The trust responded by equipping the toll house with a pistol, bayonet and a rattle to be sounded as an alarm. There were other murders at Padbury in 1825 and Risborough in 1850.

Peter's book gives us glimpses into a lost and forgotten world, a community of workers, officials, surveyors, tollgate keepers, all serving to improve and maintain the highways that served an expanding economy in transition from a rural and agricultural backwardness to urban and industrial advance. Anyone interested in the history of their county and of their immediate locality will find in Peter's work a treasury of detail, a complete account of the turnpike network and a record of numerous small dramas that took place. It is a fascinating and informed record that demands to find a place on every bookshelf.

Michael Ghirelli