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REVIEWS

Kent in Prehistoric Times. By Paul Ashbee. Tempus Publishing Ltd, 2005. 223 pp. 73 illustrations and maps. Paperback. £19.99. ISBN 0 7524 3136 6.

General accounts of prehistoric Kent have been few and this new volume is to be warmly welcomed, particularly as it is written by Dr Paul Ashbee, an eminent prehistorian and long-standing member of the Society. In an all too brief overview of ancient Kent from the Palaeolithic period through to the eve of the Roman invasion Dr Ashbee provides us with a readable and coherent account of past discoveries in Kent, showing how these combine to throw at least a little light on the nature of the prehistoric occupation of our County.

The volume consists of seven principal chapters. Beginning with an interesting summary of the efforts of early antiquaries and pioneering prehistorians to understand our county's ancient past, we then move on to all-important environmental considerations, before arriving at the main part of the book, which comprises five period-based chapters, providing respective summaries of the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Finally, there is an epilogue that introduces us to the Romans and has some thought-provoking comments on the present state and future of Kent's prehistoric heritage. An extensive bibliography gives a useful list of primary sources for the information set out in the text. Lastly, a helpful index lists personal names; sites and places; and subjects. Ashbee is most at home with the Neolithic and Bronze-Age material and there are good summaries of such topics as the Medway megaliths, the results of Bronze-Age round barrow investigations and bronze implement finds.

Contained within the body of the text are some particularly interesting ideas and comments; the notion that the Roman amphitheatre at Richborough may have begun life as a Neolithic henge monument is something certainly worthy of further investigation and comes as new work at this crucial site is being planned. The idea that the outer defences of Dover Castle incorporate the remains of an Iron-Age hillfort is again brought out; indeed a late Bronze-Age origin for the primary earthworks is now suggested. There are also useful descriptions and background

notes to many early discoveries, including significant details which are often missed out or passed over. Thus, we are reminded that Evans's frequently reproduced illustration of the Aylesford 'family circle' of Belgic cremations is a reconstruction, rather than being based on an actual field drawing.

The main disappointment of this book, however, is the general lack of references to the most recent discoveries and research undertaken in our county. Thus, we note that for the Palaeolithic period there is no mention of John Wymers's important study summarising the results of the Southern Rivers Project; nor to the work on the high-level Palaeolithic sites of east Kent, particularly the two important monographs produced by Julie Scott-Jackson and Vicky Winton concerning investigations and finds from Wood Hill, Kingsdown, near Deal. For the Iron Age, although there is some discussion of the use of Celtic coinage in Kent, there is no reference to the series of important papers on this subject recently published by David Holman, most notably his county-wide overview which appeared in this journal for 2000.

This book provided an opportunity to draw together some conclusions from the vast amount of new data recovered by field-work over the last decade, but to a large extent this opportunity has been missed. In Dr Ashbee's defence, however, it has to be said that much of this new information is presently covered only by interim notes and unpublished assessment reports which are often not widely available. This, together with the current pace of fieldwork and the substantial number of different bodies employed on a range of projects within the county, is now making it very difficult for any one person to keep abreast of the latest developments. In many ways the book has perhaps been written several years too soon. If the publishers should decide to commission a revised and updated edition in say five or ten years time one suspects that many aspects of Kentish prehistory will look very different indeed – provided proper publication of sites and finds can keep pace with the increasing rate of discovery.

In the meantime, Paul Ashbee's book has provided us with a solid, useful account of what was known about Kent's prehistory up to the end of the twentieth century. For those unfamiliar with the periods covered, here is a good overview of things as they stood at the start of the new millennium. We must now all work together to move things on and to fully publish the great wealth of new evidence concerning prehistoric Kent that is accumulating on a daily basis.

KEITH PARFITT

The North Downs. By Peter Brandon. Phillimore 2005. xvi + 288 pp. 258 b/w illustrations and maps + 30 colour plates. Hardback £25. ISBN 1 860 773532.

In her review of Dr Brandon's book on *The Kent and Sussex Weald*, Sue Petrie concluded that readers would want to put their walking boots on and go to discover its secrets for themselves. The same could equally well be said of this latest study of the South-East of England. This is a book that is difficult to put down not least because of Brandon's fluent and engaging prose style which adapts so well to his delight in the different facets of the Surrey Hills and the North Downs in Kent. The geographical spread of the Downs provides, at its boundaries, a wealth of different communities and topographies, not least the ever-spreading tentacles of London which provide scope for examining the social and economic interaction between the capital and its southern neighbours, from the time when Southwark was part of Surrey to the picture of a Eurostar train speeding through the Kent countryside.

The early chapters are products of Brandon's strengths in historical geography as he introduces the reader to the landscape, the geology, the natural history and, gradually, the inhabitants and their impact on the Downs. By 'tracing with a finger on a map', or in his case with words, 'the rib[s] of chalk hills', he is able to pause and look in detail at selected sites to illustrate his evaluation of the nature of the area, such as the deeply secretive group of villages on the 'high chalkland between Maidstone and Sittingbourne', Stockbury, Hucking, Bredgar and Bredhurst, or the exposed, and so very familiar, coastal chalk cliffs at Dover.

Although the whole book is arranged in chronological order, once he reaches the early modern period Brandon introduces some more thematic chapters, which allow the reader to dip into short essays on a fairly eclectic range of topics. The short chapter on the sensitive landscaping of Wotton by Sir John Evelyn (grandson of the diarist), after the timber had been decimated under financial pressure in the previous generation, clearly highlights Brandon's concern for the careful management of what riches remain in the landscape of this corner of England. The chapter on the 'Literary inspiration of the Downs and Hills' is also a very personal excursion into a selection of prose and poetry inspired by their authors' contact with the area. His comments on Chaucer and H.E. Bates, for example, say nothing new, but do serve to remind us that they can be revisited with pleasure. However, this reviewer believes she is not alone in being relatively ignorant of the love of the landscape of the Downs in the poetry of George Meredith who 'was the Londoner's poet and his country was London's countryside'. On the other hand rather surprisingly, in his discussion of the influence of Kent, and in particular Godmersham Park, on the writings of Jane Austen, Brandon does not mention *Mansfield*

Park. Other thematic chapters look at such diverse topics as the Linton estate of the Mann and Cornwallis families, following a short survey of the conditions of the nineteenth-century poor; rural arts and crafts; the landscape artists; and the North Downs in the Second World War, before concluding with the positive and negative influences facing the landscape in the twenty-first century, balancing the innovative farming initiatives at Lees Court Estate against the vulnerability of villages in the face of closing local amenities and the spread of housing developments.

According to the fly-leaf Brandon spent much of his youth exploring on foot and bicycle the Surrey Hills and his early love of that part of the North Downs shines through all his descriptions, whereas his later discovery of the detail of the Downs in Kent are slightly more detached, but to this native of that more eastern part his study only serves to fan the flames of a similar early love.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS

Iwade: Occupation of a North Kent Village from the Mesolithic to the Medieval Period. By Barry Bishop and Mark Bagwell, Pre-Construct Archaeology Monograph 3. 2005. 150 pp. 116 figures + 21 tables. Paperback £14.95. ISBN 0 9542938 2 7.

Archaeological reports can be a bit dry, with discussions which focus entirely on features and artefacts. The authors of this monograph have made determined efforts to 'people' the landscape which they have uncovered. From a small group of later Mesolithic hunters repairing their flint toolkit in the shelter of a fallen tree, perhaps around 5000 BC, to the sensitive and careful burial of a small pet dog in about 1500 AD; the authors never forget that essentially archaeology should attempt to tell a human story.

The opening chapter gives the background to the excavations at Iwade, which is the last village on the main road to the Isle of Sheppey before the Swale crossing is reached. The two areas explored lay either side of the main road and the archaeological investigation took place in advance of two separate housing developments. This introductory chapter also outlines the methodology adopted and the scope of the report. The second chapter puts the village of Iwade into its regional context. There are discussions of the changing coastline, the environment, topography and geology.

Chapters 3 to 5 form the archaeological core of the publication and cover a huge period of 8,000 years or so, from the Later Mesolithic period to the Medieval. Chapter 3 begins by looking at the earlier prehistoric activity on the site. The earliest human activity is represented by a quantity of flintwork discovered in a pit, which the excavators interpreted as the hollow formed by a fallen tree. But this was temporary, short term occupation which seems to have been the pattern until the middle Bronze

Age. The period from about 1500 to 600 BC seems to be characterised by greater continuity of occupation.

A series of middle Bronze-Age pits were found across the site, two of which seem to have been specially dug in order to receive a pot. Another pit nearly two metres deep may perhaps have been a well or possibly had ritual significance. By the middle of the twelfth century BC a series of linear ditches and a trackway show that a field system was being created, but very little evidence was found for permanent settlement. Interestingly two shallow pits were discovered containing human cremation material, although these were not complete cremations. Radiocarbon analysis suggests a date in the late second millennium BC for these 'token cremations'. After a period of no discernible activity whatsoever from about 600 BC, when the late Bronze-Age field system seems to have been abandoned, the first evidence for permanent settlement is a late Iron-Age farmstead established early in the first century BC. This is discussed in chapter 4 and forms the archaeological heart of the publication.

Two broad phases of occupation were found. The first consists of a roughly rectangular ditched enclosure containing two circular structures dating to *c.* 100 BC. Then in the early first century AD the enclosure was subdivided and a further two circular structures constructed. Also in this phase a further ditched enclosure was constructed adjacent to the first. The site seems to have been occupied until about the time of the Roman invasion, so may have only been in existence for a period of about 150 years. The circular structures have been tentatively identified as roundhouses and it is possible that the second pair were replacements for the first. Reconstructing their original form is difficult and this is discussed fully in the report. Evidence for the nature of the economy practised at the site suggests that cereal cultivation was not a major activity. There are no grain storage pits and few of the four-post structures often interpreted as granaries. However, quern fragments indicate that cereals were processed and consumed.

The main evidence for the nature of the agricultural production comes from the animal bone assemblage. Cattle bones formed the clear majority followed by sheep, pig and horse. This demonstrates that the primary food source was cattle and it was clear that these were butchered and consumed on the site. The cattle were mature when slaughtered, having presumably enjoyed a productive life as draft animals or as milk producers. A pottery jar with a series of small holes in the base may suggest the processing of dairy products, perhaps functioning as a strainer for the manufacture of butter or cheese. The pottery assemblage was not large but is discussed in detail. In the early phase up to about 25 BC most is of local origin, but in the later phase there is more evidence for wider contacts. Pottery from the Canterbury area becomes common and some may have come from Essex and the Folkestone area. There was no evidence for any imports from the Continent such as amphora fragments.

This farmstead was abandoned sometime around 43 AD or a little earlier. There is then another gap, so characteristic of this site, with no real activity discernible until the twelfth century AD. The Roman and Medieval periods are discussed in chapter 5. There is very little evidence relating to the Roman period just a few pottery fragments and no Saxon material at all. Activity begins again toward the end of the twelfth century around the time that the medieval village of Iwade was becoming established to the north of the site.

Dating toward the end of the twelfth century, the first feature consists of a ditch, 1 metre wide, traced for a length of 100 metres and continuing beyond the limits of the excavation to both the north and south and is probably a field boundary. The excavators also discovered the corner of a much more substantial ditch dating to the early thirteenth century, which they felt may have formed part of the enclosure for a high status occupation site. No structural remains were found but the finds from the ditch suggest that there was a nearby settlement, which presumably lay outside the area of excavation. These finds, such as quern fragments, oyster shells and animal bones as well as burnt wattle and daub, suggest that the settlement may have been of fairly high status. This raises the possibility that this ditch formed part of a moated enclosure. The latest evidence for medieval activity on the site, dating to around 1500, is the careful burial of a small dog. The dog was laid on a large fragment of pottery in a grave specifically dug to accommodate it. Evidence that the dog was injured when young, and therefore unable to work, suggests that it was kept as a much loved pet.

A detailed discussion of the environmental evidence is presented in chapter 6. This examines the organic evidence and also discusses the animal bone assemblages. The lack of cereal grains from all periods is noteworthy and suggests that arable farming was never an important aspect of the economy of the site. The final chapter considers the findings from Iwade in a wider archaeological and historical context and provides a good discussion of recent archaeological research in north Kent.

This is a thorough investigation of a fairly small site, it is very well illustrated with maps and plans and all the finds are discussed in detail. Comparatively few artefacts were found and in a way it is this kind of negative evidence which makes this excavation so interesting. This monograph makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of the north Kent coast and Thames estuary. The two large gaps in activity are especially noteworthy as is the sudden abandonment of the late Iron-Age farmstead around 43 AD, a phenomenon noted at other sites in the area. These long periods of inactivity punctuated by sudden bursts of intense activity must reflect wider social changes and the evidence presented in this publication will ultimately help our understanding of those changes.

COLIN ANDREWS

The 1258-9 Special Eyre of Surrey and Kent, edited and with Introduction by Andrew H. Hershey, 150 x 250mm. lxxxix + 322 pp., frontispiece. Surrey Record Society, vol. xxxviii, 2004. Hardback, £15. ISBN 0 902978 13 6.

This publication is to be welcomed for the light which it throws on national politics as well as on what was happening in Kent and Surrey. The eyre constituted an important part of the baronial reform movement of Henry III's reign and Dr Hershey provides a clear and detailed background to the movement in his Introduction as well as showing how Kent and Surrey fit into the national picture. The eyre roll is in some respects incomplete and this is not surprising in view of the fact that the rolls remained the property of the justices and were not handed into a royal archive. For Kent it appears that some complaints were not heard by the justiciar, since there are no returns from the hundreds in the lathes of Sutton and St Augustine. In his edition of the eyre roll, Hershey has numbered the cases and has given both the Latin text and English translation.

Judicial reform was a vital part of the baronial reform movement in 1258. Four knights were to be chosen in each county to record complaints against sheriffs, bailiffs and others and to present these to the justiciar when he visited the county to hear and determine the complaints. The office of justiciar had lapsed after 1234 during Henry III's personal rule. The significance of Hugh Bigod's appointment in 1258 is discussed fully by Hershey who emphasises his moderation and the extent to which he kept the trust of barons and knights in the years 1258-60.

The thirteenth century was an age of considerable development in the royal courts and in the definition of common law and local custom. Royal and baronial officials, anxious to increase the king's or their lord's power and wealth as well as their own, had plenty of opportunities for malpractice, as evidenced by the complaints coming from all social groups. Sheriffs were particularly unpopular. Henry III's need for money resulted in increments being imposed over and above the county farm which the sheriff rendered to the exchequer; Kent faced an increment of £145 in 1249. Such demands led to extortion and the imposition of new, uncustomary dues.

Hugh Bigod sat at Canterbury in January 1259, where he heard the presentments of the four knights and also a large number of *querelae* or oral complaints. This eyre saw a marked rise in the use of the *querela* which was a simpler procedure than initiating a case by writ and indicates that the reformers wanted to widen access to justice. Cases brought against officials included the accusation against John de Wootton that he had raised new sums of money while sheriff; another former sheriff, Thomas Aubeny, was convicted of extortion. William de la Green,

bailiff of William de Say, took goods from his lord's men in Burham and Birling and fined them heavily. Great lords, such as Archbishop Boniface of Savoy and Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, used their power to seize land and judicial privileges. The Kentish knight, Walter de St John, suffered at the hands of Roger de Leybourne and alleged that he could not get justice at the king's court because Roger had the backing of the king's half-brother, William de Valence.

As well as these abuses, the roll contains cases of disseisin, robbery, marriage, dower and wardship. Unique to Kent are the references to gavelkind. Details of gavelkind tenure were mostly unwritten at this date and therefore could be manipulated by officials eager to make money. The jurors of the hundred of Milton Regis were forthright in their statements. On the death of a gavelkind tenant, if the heir was a minor, the mother or the heir's nearest relative on the mother's side was to be the guardian of the heir and his land, answering to the heir for the profits when he came of age. A 'reasonable relief' was levied when the heir took over the land but no fine should be demanded. Yet the bailiffs of the hundred, since the time of William le Breton as sheriff, insisted on a heavy fine (£33 6s. 8d. in one case). The matter was referred to the king.

There was plenty to do when Hugh Bigod conducted his eyre in Kent, and Dr Hershey sees him as a competent justiciar. Historians interested in the thirteenth century are indebted to Dr Hershey for editing this eyre roll and setting it in its national and local context.

JENNIFER WARD

Assembly places and practices in medieval Europe. Edited by Alik Pantos and Sarah Semple. 252 pp., 55 b/w illustrations. Four Courts Press, 2004. Hardback, £50.00. ISBN 1 85182 665 3.

This collection of essays on early medieval assembly places and practices in the British Isles, Scandinavia and Francia will be of particular interest to archaeologists, but should also appeal to cultural historians. Using evidence from archaeological excavations and surveys, place-names and literary sources, the various contributors cover a widely diverse range of topics, including the history and uses of royal burial mounds in Ireland; the Old English vocabulary of assembly; and the workings of the early Frankish *mallus*. The latter was a local judicial assembly in the sixth and seventh centuries, where cases involving matters such as theft, arson, some instances of murder, transfers of property, and the betrothal of widows were heard. As a means of exploring the development of such assembly places in north-west Europe, most contributors adopt a case study approach. This may involve a reassessment of the research of earlier scholars: Thomas Charles-Edwards' examination of the work of

Sir Ifor Williams, an expert on medieval Welsh literature, in an essay on assemblies and courts in medieval Wales. Some employ a comparable approach, such as Aliko Pantos' assessment of several assembly places in England, while others, for example Stephen Driscoll, note the limits of current scholarship on ancient assembly places, and highlight the need for further research, especially fieldwork if archaeologists and historians are to gain a clearer understanding of how, where and why these fascinating sites existed.

In addition to their intrinsic value, for those fascinated by the early development of political processes in post-Roman Western Europe, these royal, judicial and 'popular' assembly places apparently retain their importance over time. This is not to suggest that such places have a continuous history of usage, rather that the periods of discontinuity provide opportunities for later users to reinterpret the site and its features as they see fit. Use and re-use of ancient sites, and the meanings peoples may have attached to them, will interest the specialist, but also the general reader. Moreover, the ideas put forward in the Introduction concerning the interpretation of these sites in the light of the political and religious changes of the sixteenth century would seem to reflect contemporary interests in other aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture, a feature that was particularly noticeable among the Kentish Protestant gentry. As Aliko Pantos and Sarah Semple point out, these ideas were at their most extreme during the Commonwealth period, but were still seen as relevant during later eras.

Unfortunately, like many academic books, the price tag seems prohibitively high for most people unless they have a very strong interest in this field or are professional archaeologists or early medieval historians. This is understandable, but a pity, because many of the essays cover places and topics that might appeal to a wider readership. The book is well produced and the figures, maps and illustrations are usefully integrated into the text.

SHEILA SWEETINBURGH

Tonbridge's Industrial Heritage. Edited by Anthony Wilson. 101 pp. 11 maps and 98 b/w illustrations. Tonbridge Historical Society, Tonbridge, 2005. £9.95. ISBN 0 9523563 2 5.

Tonbridge, once a market town, is still surrounded by open countryside today and yet as this splendid book makes clear it has a rich industrial heritage. Dr Wilson and his collaborators are to be commended for producing an excellent survey of Tonbridge's industrial landscape illustrated with clear maps, pertinent photographs and contemporary illustrations, accompanied by an economically worded and highly

informative text in an attractively designed book. This book is a history, but also a well-shaped guide and gazetteer, divided into eight sections covering main industries, with each site discussed and indicated by its OS grid reference. Thus this comprehensive book is designed to be used and consulted.

The starting point, by Frank Tullett, is the geology and topographical location of the town as a bridging point over the River Medway with the road to the coast running across the half-a-mile wide flood plain. The river and its neighbouring streams provided transport and water power (also annual floods), while the clay sands, gravels and Hastings Beds provided building materials. Next is a succinct outline of the industrial history of Tonbridge by Christopher Chalklin. This is then followed by the eight sections: agriculture and allied trades, water and wind power, extractive industries, metalworking and engineering, manufacturing, utilities and services, communications and entertainment, and transport.

Tonbridge had a wide range of industries of varying sizes. In the mid nineteenth century the railway was the largest single employer of wage labour; in 1881 the census listed 47 cricket ball makers in the town in several workshops – they had organised their own union by the 1890s; a printing works produced *Punch* in the 1840s, and the Whitefriars Press (it printed books for Penguin in the 1950s) was the largest employer in the town in the late 1940s with 300-350 employees. There is no mention of stone and glass bottles (there were two breweries in the town in the nineteenth century), or glass for windows (difficult stuff to transport), being manufactured in Tonbridge. One wonders whether they were imported via the Medway wharf (the river was made navigable to the town by 1740) and by the railway line opened in 1842 south of the river and half-a-mile from the old town. Carriers are not mentioned in the section on 'Transport' and a local map showing their routes would have been instructive. And now that coal merchants' offices have virtually disappeared, how and by whom was coal distributed before the coming of the railway and after?

It might be helpful to say a little more on just two sections to indicate the usefulness of this book. First, 'Water and wind power': water provided the energy for milling corn, fulling cloth, making gunpowder, and iron making processes including furnaces, while the sole windmill located in Southborough ground corn until the 1860s. Second, 'Utilities and services': industrial processes which are often accorded brief mention in local historical studies, although vital to economic and social well-being. The section covers gas production and distribution both public and private (gasworks, holders); water supply (water works, reservoirs, wells – but no mention of early pumps); surface drainage and sewerage (works, pumping station, and the recently constructed flood control barrier at Leigh completed in 1982); electricity (generation, street furniture); and

the fire service (fire hooks, insurance marks, hydrant covers, fire station). Other utilities such as postal service, telegraph and telephone are covered in the section on 'Communications and entertainment'.

This is an excellent book and it is to be hoped that it will have a wide sale within the Tonbridge area and to those who plan to visit the town. It also provides a model for the kind of publication that could be undertaken by other local history societies looking for a project that could involve many hands. Other possibilities are gazetteers of field and place-names, and local biographical dictionaries – for which future generations of historians will give thanks.

DAVID KILLINGRAY

A Market Town and its Surrounding Villages: Cranbrook, Kent in the Later Seventeenth Century. By Anthony Poole. Phillimore 2005. xx + 220 pp. 29 b/w illustrations + 41 maps and figures. Hardback £30. ISBN 1 860773451.

Written with encouragement from, and in response to, Margaret Spufford's 1974 plea 'for studies [of] "social areas" based on a contiguous group of parishes, ideally focused on a market town', Anthony Poole has succeeded in writing a truly successfully local history. This is history based very much on the people of the area, that is the various communities living in the Cranbrook area in the later seventeenth century: Cranbrook, Benenden, Biddenden, Frittenden, Goudhurst, Hawkurst and Staplehurst. Poole centres the core of the book around the family within the community, but the first two chapters are exemplars in the planning and contextualising of a local study. The clarity of his first chapter on the sources sets the scene for the nature of the primary evidence for the Cranbrook region, but also includes much commentary which would be useful if applied to other areas.

In his second chapter on the Cranbrook region, Poole gives a good context for the setting of his study in the seventeenth century, ensuring that the reader understands the geology and topography, and giving the background to the contemporary socio-economic environment. By careful reference to other studies he is able to draw comparisons and give an understanding of national trends; for example by analysing the Cambridge and Cranbrook hearth tax returns there is a good sense of the relative wealth of the area. Particularly helpful in this chapter are the maps and the supporting evaluation of them explaining the nature and size of property and landownerships. Throughout the book the tables, graphs and maps are finely reproduced, clear and easy to interpret, a rare treat.

The core quasi-sociological studies in chapters 3, 4 and 5 rely heavily

on statistical analysis, but with a sensible caution about the usefulness of averages, which may bear little resemblance to reality. Poole cites the average age of marriage partners in Benenden, which echoes a larger study carried out on Canterbury, of 25.6 years for men and 23.5 years for women, although not a single couple actually matched these ages, with disparities ranging over more than twenty years. At this stage he refreshingly recognises that communities are made up of individuals not statistics. These three chapters deal with 'The making of the family', that is marriage patterns, 'The growth of the family' or the next generation and child mortality, and then 'Preservation of the family' and survival rates and care for survivors. By choosing to look closely at the growth of five families representing a wide range of social class, Poole highlights individual tragedies and the frequent infant deaths which show that 'wealth was no guarantee of family success'.

Carrying out careful and detailed research he is able to give equal weight to both 'The "chiefer sort"' (chapter 6) and 'The "other inhabitants"' (chapter 7) extending the argument in the earlier chapter on 'making the family' on the different nature of kinship networks among the gentry and above, compared to the more organic family patterns of the lower status inhabitants. Cranbrook emerges as unusual in country market towns because of the predominance of a gentry class based on industry, with a large number of clothiers who preserved their status through intermarriage within the same socio-economic group. The evidence for the 'other inhabitants' is inevitably drawn primarily from the records of those who needed the care or support of the parish, that is unsupported children, widows, the very poor and the sick. Poole is somewhat surprised at the level of mutual support he discovered, but uses two well-chosen examples to show that extended kinship networks did indeed provide a safety net for a large number of those in need.

The final three chapters use the evidence more widely to pursue careful studies into three further aspects of support networks; support that was as varied as bondsmen, executors and witness of wills, money lending and borrowing, before the banking system was fully established, and the role of the extensive Nonconformist networks operating in the traditionally radical religious environment of Cranbrook and its satellite villages.

If there is a weakness in this comprehensive and very satisfactory study of the people and communities of the late seventeenth-century Cranbrook area, it is the abrupt ending. Although each chapter does end with its own concise conclusion, something does seem to be missing that would once more bring the whole study back either into a comparative focus with studies of other communities, or to its place in the wider history of Kent.

ELIZABETH EDWARDS

The Archbishops' Town. The Making of Medieval Croydon. By Oliver Harris. 58 pp., 2 maps and 6 b/w illustrations (cover illustration colour). Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society Ltd, Proceedings vol. 18 (9). Softback £3.75 incl. p+p from Brian Lancaster, 68 Woodcote Grove Road, Coulsdon CR5 2AD. ISBN 0 906047 20 4.

Working in Croydon in the early 1970s, much was new and an abiding memory is of a windy central area. Seen from the train from London to Gatwick or Brighton, Croydon gives the impression of a contemporary suburb with high-rise office blocks rather than of a medieval town. Indeed, the only physical survivals of war and Reformation are the great hall and chapel of the Archbishop's Palace and the tower of the parish church. The author has sought to show that Croydon was an important medieval town and that the presence of a palace for the archbishops of Canterbury contributed to its development by exploring the social and economic context in which the town developed in the later middle ages.

The evidence is both scant and scattered and required considerable and, no doubt, painstaking detective work to uncover. Harris found that the best way to start was to collect the information for the Croydon of around 1500 and then to try to piece together how that point was reached. Starting from the topography of modern Croydon and adding information from what medieval records exist, especially relating to the archbishop of Canterbury's holdings. Croydon was at the heart of a great estate of the archbishops extending from the Thames to the Sussex border held since the seventh or eighth centuries and was well-placed to serve as an administrative centre as well as a resting place for the archbishop when he was on his travels. This then is the basis on which medieval Croydon was built and Harris constructs a delightful picture of life in the town and in the archbishop's household in the later middle ages. Comparisons are made with similar towns to show that Croydon was an important centre. Indeed, it was the third largest in Surrey after Southwark and Kingston. In particular there are parallels with Maidstone and other towns under the control of the archbishops of Canterbury. Finally, there is a thoughtful analysis of the archbishops' legacy in the formation of the post-medieval town.

The paper is very well researched, as the 316 endnotes making up almost half the total text testify. The result is an important contribution to the history of Croydon and also provides an example of an approach to problems of urban identity where there is little obvious evidence.

MARY BERG

Gold And Gilt, Pots And Pins, Possessions And People In Medieval Britain, by David A. Hinton. 452 pp., 8pp. colour plates and numerous halftones, Oxford University Press, 2005. Hardback £30. ISBN-10: 0-19-926453-8.

David Hinton's aim here, as stated in his Introduction, is 'to examine some of the ways in which people in medieval Britain presented themselves', explaining their behaviour by considering 'the reasons for people's decisions to acquire, display, conceal, and discard some of the things that were important to them'. This is no small task within the boundaries of a book whose scope stretches from the fourth to the early sixteenth century.

This book is a part of Oxford's Medieval history and archaeology series, volumes intended to 'bring together archaeological, historical, and visual methods to offer new approaches to aspects of medieval society, economy and material culture.' He writes as Professor of Archaeology at Southampton, but presumably with the intention of encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue. As a historian reading the book, the reviewer was at all points aware that the underlying question here is an archaeologist's question – just how much can we learn about behaviour from extant material culture? But there *is* also commitment to interdisciplinarity, for instance in the widening of perspective offered by the visual and formal connections between different media. Decorative schemes are traced moving between different forms – the stag, for instance, 'viewed askance' as an image from Sutton Hoo onwards, 'until rehabilitated by the popularity of Bestiaries after the tenth century' [103]; Beowulf and Bede are brought into play to shed light on burial practices and necklace patterns. Documentary sources are also occasionally used – a rise in taxation based on the value of goods from the twelfth century creates a different context for objects, in a society where 'everybody became inured to having their possessions regularly assessed by their neighbours' and objects therefore placed individuals socially.

There are some striking insights of this kind, but they do not structure the narrative. The vast majority of the text is given over to the sheer weight of archaeological detail. As a result, familiar sites such as Sutton Hoo can be understood in the light of lesser-known excavations, and readers with a specific local interest, for example in Kentish practice, are able to contextualise their concerns. They might be justly proud that the Anglo-Saxon Disc brooch on the front cover, which surely sells the book in a way that no review ever could, is from Wingham. But they will also learn that the story of Kentish origins is complex: 'no grave in Kent has objects that are all exclusively 'Jutish'; it is as though some items were accepted and others rejected, as were things from Francia and other parts of the continent, creating an identity that was specific to east Kent itself'.

The county's status as a place where objects exclusive to a single region could be found forms part of one of several important themes which Hinton's command of detail enables him to pursue across the volume. The gradual development of a national culture offers a context within which individual items gain greater meaning: the widespread existence of similar forms across different kingdoms suggests that '[b]y the middle of the seventh century, if not by its beginning, the aristocracy throughout England were as similar in their costume as they were in their speech'. Everyday material culture follows this pattern of standardisation around a century later, but by the end of the book 'a significant difference between regions can be seen in portable material culture' for the first time since the Norman Conquest. The rise of Christianity and the development of a money economy, literacy and the significance of personified objects, also crop up repeatedly in the different chapters. For example, the knife from Sittingbourne 'with 'Sigebereht owns me' on one side and 'Biorhtelm made me' in conspicuously larger letters on the other' hints at the complex relationships between owners and makers, the literate and the illiterate and the development of particular kinds of individuality and identity.

But they are only hints. There is no room to linger over the *meaning* of objects in a way which complements their detailed description. It is also hard to trace the chronology of social and political change. Brief paragraphs, chiefly at the beginning and end of chapters, have to do the considerable work of placing the objects in 'historical' terms: the assertion that 'Townspople made up somewhere between seven and ten per cent of the total population in England, leaving the peasantry in an overwhelming majority', for instance, helps enormously to situate the finds socially.

The breadth of archaeological reference is both the strength and the limitation of this book then. But criticisms are in many ways requests for more – enquiries which are provoked by the variety of the material Hinton presents. There is enough here to trigger and begin to answer interesting questions on almost every aspect of the social, cultural and political history of Medieval Britain.

CATHERINE RICHARDSON

Edward Cressy 1792-1858. Architect and Civil Engineer. By Diana Burfield. xvii + 222 pp., 56 plates. Shaun Tyas, 2003. Cased with dust jacket. £24 from the publisher, 1 High Street, Donington, Lincolnshire PE11 4TA. ISBN 1 900289 65 2.

Biographies of locally memorable individuals are an important way of cladding the bare bones of history with human liveliness. This exceptionally thorough work is by a direct descendant of the subject. Cressy was

born in Dartford into a middle class family. His career was essentially as a civil engineer and architect when the two professions were not distinguished in both senses of the word and had not long before been often described as 'carpenter'. However, as inscribed on his tombstone at Horton Kirby, 'life was to him a sea of troubles, yet he found ... in his profession a shield which the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune failed to pierce'.

Cresy was an undoubted scholar whose magnum opus was *An Encyclopaedia of Civil Engineering* in 1,667 pages. He also obsessively spent much time on accurate measurements of antiquarian remains, cathedrals, etc. in Italy. Frequently however, publications were not brought to completion for reasons that are often unclear.

Relatively few of his building designs were constructed but there are examples in Paris, in Pall Mall and Knightsbridge as well as *Hulsewood* (Wilmington), *Holmesdale* (South Darent) for himself, the *Priory* (Leatherhead), a school at Horton Kirby and major alterations to *Down House* for his friend, Charles Darwin. All are judged competent but not innovative except in their plumbing. This unglamorous subject leads to Cresy's other expertise in drainage and sanitation. Thus he participated in surveys in Dartford and sixteen more for the Board of Health in *inter alia* Brighton, Windsor and Margate. These were undertaken because of national concerns over the poor state of health in the newly overcrowded industrial conurbations. He also planned several drainage systems and designed an arched cottage for agricultural labourers, a precursor of the World War II Nissen Hut. In Dartford he undertook the design and supervision of the construction of the Gasworks in 1826, the North porch of the Parish Church, a bridge over the Darent at Horton Kirby and further afield, a Table tomb in Arundel. He was a keen advocate of the abortive project for a rail link between Dartford and Sevenoaks.

He participated in the activities of several organisations such as the 'The Architects' and Antiquaries' Club' and the Society of Antiquaries to whose publications he contributed but found dull and lethargic. Later he was one of the founders and President of the Society (later the Institute) of British Architects, now the RIBA. In 1835 he excavated at Eynsford Castle, the ability of his work being marked by our late member, Stuart Rigold. He was angry about the destruction of Fawkham Manor House and the neglect of the little Church there. In 1845 he was elected President of the Dartford Society for the Advancement of Useful Knowledge. It had only 76 Members from a local population of 6,000 – nevertheless a considerably better percentage than that of its current equivalent!

The references and biographical notes are properly and consistently laid out and the plates, unlike in so many such publications, well reproduced. The general view of Dartford in 1830, from W. H. Ireland's *Kent* might well have been substituted by the one of 'Market Day' from the same work, which shows one of the first Gas lamps.

The thoroughness of this study is truly astonishing. Not only have many original sources been examined, regardless of their location, but also the whole is set in the context of the external events of the time. This, and the style, leavened with dextrous touches of allusions to today's events and humour, for example, 'too tired and emotional' of the Editor of *The Builder* in 1845, make this an excellent example of the genre. On p. 44 Brown is probably a misprint (not the author's) for Lown.

Cresy and his life remain, as our author admits, elusive matters. He had a happy marriage, five children and many friends. He had a concern for the new urban working class, evinced in practical actions and also for local and general history. As was then a widespread convention, he tended to idealise the lives of the past poor. He both valued new devices such as engines and mathematical analyses applied to construction but also the use of empirical evidence from precise measurements of ancient structures. As his tombstone inscription summarises, he did not obtain that degree of achievement he hoped for and his relicts considered he deserved. Perhaps his distaste for the then current architectural fashions, his disinclination to compromise and his relatively secure home and financial (except on odd occasions) circumstances are the explanation. Another factor of relevance may be his participation in property speculations (not all of which proved profitable).

This work constitutes both a remarkable tribute to an illustrious ancestor and an important addition to our knowledge of significant Kentish characters.

PETER DRAPER

The West Kent Probate Index. Wills Administrations for all courts and peculiars in the Diocese of Rochester 1750-1858. By David Wright. 2005. CD in Adobe Acrobat. £12.50 +50p p+p; £15.00 airmail, from the compiler, 71 Island Wall, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 1EL. Email: davideastkent@aol.com.

David Wright has produced a very useful, and easily accessible, resource for local and family historians with an interest in the Diocese of Rochester. Kentish researchers are tolerably well served by probate indexes inasmuch as the wills for the Diocese of Canterbury (east Kent) are more or less fully indexed, although the equally (and sometimes more) valuable administrations are not. Hitherto those with ancestors in the Diocese of Rochester have had to make do with a card index to some, but not all, wills in the Maidstone searchrooms, whilst the administrations have remained completely inaccessible unless one is prepared to brave long and slow searches in the probate act books.

This master index of wills and administrations to the two probate and

two peculiar courts of the Diocese of Rochester brings together all the 6,300 or so entries into a single alphabetical sequence. Each entry shows the name and surname of the testator or intestate, the parish of residence occupation and/or marital status, the year and month of the grant, and the issuing court. The index is preceded by a comprehensive and lucid account of the material indexed (citing CKS references), a summary of abbreviations, and further extremely valuable indexes of parishes, other locations, and occupations. All original wills and administration bonds have also been checked and, as Dr Wright says, some entries accidentally omitted from the probate act books have now been rescued from oblivion.

The value of such resources which can be accessed at the researcher's convenience cannot be over-estimated, as they not only save time and expense in visiting archives, but can also ensure that all such visits can be planned and used to the greatest effect.

DUNCAN HARRINGTON

Living in Kent, a family history 1289-1900. By Michael Crux. 124 pp. B/w illustrations and maps throughout. 2005. Paperback £9.95 from the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre, Faversham; Baggins Book Bazaar, 19 High Street, Rochester or £12.50, incl. p+p, from the author at Helios House, The Street, Barham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 6NZ.

The increasing fascination with, and involvement in, family history studies can rarely be as satisfying as Michael Crux's successful investigation of his family's history providing a line of descent from 1289. Rather than a personal genealogy starting from the present and going back to the eighteenth or nineteenth century, he has produced a fascinating family history up to 1900. A family that was wealthy enough to leave wills and property and, despite some misfortunes, on the whole remained within the same commercial/farming class in Kent, has provided enough evidence to provide snapshots of the economic and social history of the county. The range of illustrations, maps and local developments mentioned in the text, while relating closely to the Crux family history, will also be of much wider interest and possible use to other family historians.