

REVIEWS

Jeremy Haslam (Editor), *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England*, 429 pp. Published by Phillimore 1984. Price £20

Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England is an important survey of our current knowledge of this sadly neglected subject. Jeremy Haslam has brought together a collection of papers dealing with the towns of Kent (Tim Tatton-Brown), Surrey (Martin O'Connell & Rob Poulton), Berkshire (Grenville Aston), Hampshire (David Hinton), Somerset (Michael Aston), and Dorset (Laurence Keen) together with chapters on the Wiltshire and Devon towns by the editor himself. The remainder of the volume is devoted to detailed discussions of particular towns ie London (Tony Dyson & John Schofield), Chichester (Julian Munby), Southampton (Philip Holdsworth), Bath (Barry Cunliffe), Gloucester (Carolyn Heighway) and Exeter (John Allen, Christopher Henderson & Robert Higham).

It is hoped that the editor's introduction will not deter too many people from reading the subsequent chapters. This introduction is unnecessarily complicated and in places extremely difficult to read. However, many good points are raised here, although the discussion would be better suited to a concluding chapter than the introduction. It was a relief to move on to Tim Tatton-Brown's well written and thus easily read chapter on the Kentish towns. The book contains a very useful and comprehensive index, and 129 figures of variable quality. There are also 8 black and white photographs of dubious relevance, and sadly, the correct plate numbers for the photographs in the London chapter have not been integrated into the text. The major criticism of this compilation must be the unfortunate editorial policy of excluding Sussex and Cornwall from the volume because recent (!) publications, 1978 and 1967 respectively, have dealt with these counties. It is also regrettable that specific chapters on Winchester and Bristol have not been included. Once into the major part of the book it is evident that this is an extremely useful synopsis of our knowledge of the Saxon towns south of the Thames. Obviously, the contributions are of variable quality, but allowing for this and for the unfortunate omissions this is and will remain an important book for anyone interested in Saxon Southern England as well as vital reading for those primarily interested in the Romano-British period.

Turning more specifically to the chapter on the Saxon towns of Surrey, Martin O'Connell and Rob Poulton have provided an excellent review of our present knowledge, and necessarily, due to the meagre evidence, this is quite a short chapter. The topography and Roman occupation of Surrey are briefly described before moving on to the evidence for a Saxon urban community in Staines. This section should be read in conjunction with Philip Jones's recent paper on Saxon and Medieval Staines (Jones, P, 1982 *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc*, 33). After a brief mention of *Escingum* (listed in the Burghal Hideage) discussion centres on Guildford, and in particular the real problem in relating the documentary evidence to the topography of the town is highlighted. This is followed by a presentation of the evidence for the Saxo-Norman community at Cherchefelle (Reigate), and the Surrey chapter ends with a brief section on the evidence from Croydon and Kingston, with a concluding discussion on the lack of Saxon urban settlements within the county. Southwark is discussed by Tony Dyson and John Schofield in the chapter on London. This is not the place to discuss the other chapters in detail, but those on Kent, Hampshire, Somerset and Gloucester are of particular interest.

In conclusion, this is a much needed survey of Anglo-Saxon towns in southern England, and in Surrey it will hopefully draw attention to the basic lack of information concerning the Saxon period in general and towns in particular. Together with the Saxon chapter in the forthcoming

publication of the papers from the conference on 'Archaeology in Surrey to 1500', it will provide an up-to-date account of our present knowledge of Saxon Surrey.

JOHN LEVESON GOWER

Courts of the Manors of Bandon and Beddington 1498-1552, transcribed and translated by Hedley Marne Gowans and edited by Michael Wilks and Jennifer Bray. xxxviii + 92 pp, incl index, and sketch map as frontispiece. Published by London Borough of Sutton Libraries and Arts Services 1983. Price £7

Manorial court rolls are a valuable source for many aspects of history, especially local history. They throw light on families and their landholdings, economic and social structure, topography and local government. Although their value has long been recognised they are probably still an underused source because of the difficulty of reading and interpreting them and analysing their evidence. Although early medieval rolls have attracted the greatest of scholars to edit them, the later rolls have been undeservedly neglected. This edition of the court rolls of the adjacent manors of Bandon and Beddington is a good example of the way in which a series, by no means exceptional in length of time covered or in completeness, can illuminate the history of the villages they cover and enable their editors to propose significant revisions to previous interpretations of that history. The Bandon rolls throw a comparatively intense light on a single, soon to be 'lost', village. The tenants inherit and purchase land, they break down hedges for firewood (certain offenders were ordered to buy sufficient fuel for their homes by Martinmas) and cut down nut trees, oaks, and elm and 'a big hawthorn', they fail to take their grain to the lord's mill, they keep ferrets. Professor Wilks, in his introduction, shows that the village of Bandon lay to the east of Beddington and probably overshadowed it, even though the parish church was situated in Beddington, until the 16th century. In contrast with the Bandon rolls, which relate solely to that village, the Beddington rolls show that Beddington manor court was used by the Carews as a central court for several of their Surrey estates and that business relating to Chessington, Reigate and Horley was transacted there. Fewer rolls survive and overall they are much less valuable than the Bandon rolls.

The Bandon and Beddington court rolls were transcribed and translated some years ago by H M Gowans, whose work has now been revised and prepared for publication by Jennifer Bray. Both Latin text and English translation are given in full and extensions of scribal abbreviations are italicised. Michael Wilks provides a lengthy introduction tracing the history of the manors from Domesday Book onwards. Since work on the edition began, further rolls, covering parts of the 14th, 15th and 17th centuries, have been deposited in Surrey Record Office. We may hope that a future publication will cover these records. One reason for hope is that the London Borough of Sutton Libraries and Arts Services have, I understand, covered their costs on what was no doubt undertaken as public service rather than as a profit making venture. They are to be congratulated on their initiative in publishing this scholarly work at a reasonable price and their successful marketing of it.

D B ROBINSON

The Letters of Anna Glyn, 1892, 60 pp, 1 plate and 1 map. Published by the Nonsuch Antiquarian Society, Occasional Paper 13. Price £2.50 including postage, from Mrs Bedwell, 37 Seymour Avenue, Ewell, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 2RS.

Members of the Documentary Group of the Nonsuch Antiquarian Society have worked as a team in providing the text, preceded by an introduction, of letters written by Anna Glyn to her family during the course of her tour of Egypt and the Holy Land in 1892. The lion's share of credit for this paper must go to Phyllis Davies who painstakingly copied the letters and wrote the introduction, but acknowledgments are also due to Peggy Bedwell for her clear sketch map of the route which Anna followed, and to other members of the group for their suggestions as to editing and presenting the letters; and to Sean Khan, Museum Officer of Bourne Hall Museum, Ewell, for his design of the cover to the paper. This project has been an interesting illustration of what can be achieved by a local society working in co-operation with the local museum.

The letters make absorbing reading as Anna, already an experienced traveller, reveals a gift for lively description with dry, understated, humorous touches. (She had a fair claim to be called an authoress as she wrote two novels, *Fifty Pounds For A Wife* and *A Pearl Of The Realm*). Admiration for the fortitude and cheerfulness with which she and other members of her party endured conditions of travel before the days of luxury coach tours over-rides the slight irritation which some might feel at the social attitudes expressed; but Anna was, after all, the daughter of the Rev Sir George Glyn, vicar of St Mary's church, Ewell, and a member of local 'society'. Anna can certainly hold her own with other egregious and adventurous Victorian ladies and, as a resident of Ewell, should have a special place in the hearts and minds of Surrey residents.

In writing her 'journal' of letters, Anna's observations cover topography, people and customs as well as historic monuments and sites visited. These letters are, therefore, important in a wider context as, unintentionally, they provide a valuable historical record of conditions in Israel at the end of the nineteenth century, seen through the eyes of a traveller from another country.

E M MYATT-PRICE

June Sampson, *All Change*, 176 pp, appendix of sponsors, black and white photographs and index. Published by St Luke's church, Kingston upon Thames, 1984. Price £5.95; proceeds to St Luke's church hall.

Miss Sampson's first book, *The story of Kingston*, has become a standard work for any reader desiring an accurate, readable history of Kingston up to the 19th century. Long-awaited, her new book is destined to be equally valuable for the very radical changes of the years following the arrival of the railway, at first in Surbiton.

The author, from many years' experience as a journalist, has the ability to bring alive the past and she has been able to use a source not available for other periods, the local newspaper, the *Surrey Comet*. The book rests heavily on extracts from the paper's leaders but is all the better for it. Much of the information, particularly the personality clashes within the council and local townspeople, will be new to many and is the result of many years' reading of back issues.

However, this is not merely a popular history but combines readability with firm information. Dates and sites are clearly given and in many cases, particularly in the breakup of large estates, the modern-day streets are named to aid location. Some of the otherwise obscure meanings of road names become clear through these interesting tales. It is because it will be such a useful

reference book that it is a pity that a subject index could not have been added. The name and place index is of course invaluable and the small maps of the major estates are especially useful for any not very familiar with the area.

Obviously in a book which is a mine of information, the odd error will occur (the House of Correction was never the County Gaol and the prisoners were transferred to Wandsworth not Lambeth, p 85). The overall impression however is of careful research and accuracy, with a little allowance to be made for personal bias perhaps for one or two of the main characters! The book would be much less entertaining though without the 'Pooley scandal' and 'the hostile obstinacy of Alderman Frederick Gould'.

The book is in paperback form but stitched and on excellent paper. The photographs are clear and beautifully presented to show before and after shots of Kingston. At £5.95 it is excellent value and it is to be hoped will raise sufficient for the completion of St Luke's hall.

MARGARET VAUGHAN-LEWIS